ACADEMY CLASSICS

MINOR POEMS

MILTON

ALLYN AND BACON

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JOHN MILTON.

The Academy Classics

MILTON

MINOR POEMS

L'ALLEGRO	IL PENSEROSO	COMUS
ARCADES	ON THE NATIVITY	LYCIDAS
ON SHAKESPEARE	AT A SOLEMN MUSIC	SONNETS

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

SAMUEL THURBER

ALLYN AND BACON

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PREFACE.

THE purpose held in view by those who place the study of Milton in high school English courses is twofold: first, that youth may seasonably become acquainted with a portion of our great classic poetry; and, secondly, that they may in this poetry encounter and learn to conquer difficulties more serious than those they have met in the literature they have hitherto read. It is for the teacher to see to it that both these aims are attained. The pupil must read with interest, and he must expect at the same time to have to do some strenuous thinking and not to object to turning over many books.

The average pupil will not at first read anything of Milton with perfect enjoyment. He will, with his wonted docility, commit passages to memory, and he will do his best to speak these passages with the elocution on which you insist. But the taste for this poetry is an acquired one, and in the acquisition usually costs efforts quite alien to the prevailing conceptions of reading as a pleasurable recreation.

The task of pedagogy at this point becomes delicate. First of all, the teacher must recognize the fact that his class will not, however good their intentions, leap to a liking for Comus or Lycidas or even for the Nativity

Ode. It is of no use to assign stanzas or lines as lessons and to expect these to be studied to a conclusion like a task of French translation. The only way not to be disappointed in the performance of the class is to expect nothing. It will be well at first, except where the test is quite simple, for the teacher to read it himself, making comment, in the way of explanation, as he goes on. Now and then he will stop and have a little quiz to hold attention. When classical allusions come up requiring research, the teacher will tell in what books the matter may be looked up, and will show how other poets, or Milton elsewhere, have played with the same piece of history or mythology. Thus a poem may be dealt with for a number of days. Repetition is, to a certain extent, excellent. The verses begin to sink into the young minds; the measure appeals to the inborn sense of rhythm; the poem is caught by the ear like a piece of music; the utterance of it becomes more like singing than speaking. In fact, the great secret of teaching poetry in school is to get rid of the commonplace manner of speech befitting a recitation in language or science, and to put in practice the obvious truth that verse has its own form, which is very different from the form of prose. But repetition may go too far. Over-familiarity may beget indifference. Other poems await the attention of the class.

The teacher who really means to interest his classes, and begins by being interested and interesting himself, will rarely fail to accomplish his purpose. The principal obstacle to success here is the necessity, that frequently exists, of conforming to the custom of examining, marking, and ranking — a practice that thwarts genuine personal

influence, formalizes all procedures, and tends to deaden natural interest by substituting for it the artificial interest of school standing. The Milton lesson must be a serious one because it is given to the study of the serious work of the gravest and most high-minded of men; and it must be an enjoyable one because it deals with the verse of the most musical of poets, and because the mood of joy is the only mood in which literature can be profitably studied.

As to the difficulties which the learner first encounters when he comes to Milton, these grow sometimes out of the diction, sometimes out of the syntax, and sometimes out of the poet's figures and allusions. Some difficulties can be explained at once and completely. Others cannot be explained at all with any reasonable hope of enriching the beginner's mind with matter that he can appropriate. Often the young reader slips over points of possible learned annotation without the least consciousness that here great scholarship might make an imposing display. Perfectly useless is it to set forth for the pupil the interesting echoes from ancient poets which generations of delving scholars have accumulated in their notes to Milton, pleasing as these are to mature readers.

The rule should be to expound and illustrate sufficiently to remove those perplexities which really tease the pupil's mind and cause him to feel dissatisfaction with himself. In many cases our only course is to postpone exposition and to trust that the learner will grow up to the insight which he as yet does not possess and which we cannot possibly give him. A learned writer, like Milton, who has read all antiquity, and who has no purpose of writing for children,

inevitably contemplates a public of men approximately his equals in culture, and expects to find "fit audience, though few."

But many of the difficulties that confront the beginner in Milton ask only to be explained at once by some one who has had more experience in the older literature. Archaic forms of words and expressions, with which the ripe student is familiar, worry the tyro, and must be accounted for. Often the common dictionaries will give all needed help; but the best means of acquiring speedy familiarity with obsolete and rare forms is a Milton concordance — such as that of Bradshaw — in connection with the Century Dictionary, or with the Oxford Dictionary, so far as this goes. These means of easy research should be at hand. I find that pupils often need a pretty sharp spur to make them use even their abridged dictionaries. But so far as concerns acquaintance with the vocabulary of poetic diction, nothing will do except the dictionary habit, accompanied by an effort of the memory to retain what has been learned.

Difficulties that lurk in an involved syntax the pupil may usually be expected to solve by study. But such a peculiar construction as that in Sonnet X 9 will probably have to be explained to him.

In the puritan theology and its implications he cannot take much interest, and will of course not be asked to do so. But high school students of Milton will ordinarily, in their historical courses, have come down to the times in which the poet lived, will understand his relation to public events, and will appreciate his feeling toward the English ecclesiastical system. Puritanism, a phenomenon of the most

tremendous importance at a certain period of English history, has so completely disappeared from the modern world, that the utterances of a seventeenth-century poet, professedly a partisan, on matters of church and state, no longer exasperate, and can barely even interest, students of literature.

To read either Paradise Lost or the Divine Comedy we must find the poet's cosmical and his theological standpoint. We have no right to be surprised or shocked at his conceptions. We must take him as he is, and let him lead us through the universe as he has planned it. So long as we set up our modern views as a standard, and by this standard judge the ancient men, we fail in hospitality of thought, and come short of our duty as readers.

This consideration suggests yet another purpose in setting youth to the reading of Milton. By no means an ancient poet, he takes us, nevertheless, to a world different from our own, and in some sense helps us out of the modern time in which our lives have fallen, to show us how other ages conceived of God and Heaven. The mark of an educated man is respect for the past; the old philosophies and religions do not startle and repel him; his ancestors were once in those stages of belief; in some stage of this vast movement of thought he and his fellows are at the present moment. This largeness of view can be fruitfully impressed on youth only by letting them read, under wise guidance, the older poets.

OUTLINES OF THE LIFE OF MILTON.

JOHN MILTON was born in London on the ninth of December, 1608. Queen Elizabeth had then been dead five years, and the literature which we call Elizabethan was still being written by the men who had begun their careers under her reign. Spenser had died in 1599. The theatres were yet in the enjoyment of full popularity, and the play-writers were producing works that continued the traditions and the manner of the Elizabethan drama. Shakespeare had still eight years to live, and at least four of the great plays to write. Bacon's fame was already great, but the events of eighteen years were to cloud his reputation and establish his renown. Jonson, great as a writer of masks, was to live till he might have seen, in Comus, how a young and scholarly puritan humanist thought that a mask should be conceived.

Born thus in the fifth year of the first of the Stuarts, Milton lived to witness all the vicissitudes of English politics in which that family was involved, except the very last. He did not see the Revolution of 1688. Surviving for fourteen years the restoration of Charles II., he died in 1674, at the age of sixty-six.

Milton's social position can be inferred from the fact that his father was what was then called a scrivener, — that is, he kept an office in his dwelling, and was employed to draw up contracts, wills, and other legal documents. This occu-

pation implied knowledge at least of the forms of the law, though not of its history or principles. It did not imply liberal education, though it brought its practitioner, doubtless, more or less into contact with men of really professional standing in the science of jurisprudence. Perhaps the elder Milton cherished a deeper conviction of the value of classic culture than do those who simply inherit, and take as a matter of course, the custom of devoting years to the study of ancient languages and literatures.

Evidently the father thought he saw in his son that promise of intellectual vigor and of sound moral stamina which justified the innovation, in his family, of sending his boy to the university. His preparation for college Milton got under private masters and at the famous public school of St. Paul's, which was near his home. This preparation consisted chiefly in exercises in Latin composition and literature, and was both thorough and effectual. At sixteen, when he went to college, he had already composed Latin verse, and he read and wrote Latin with facility.

In 1625 Milton entered Christ's College, Cambridge. Here he remained as a student seven years, or till 1632, taking in course his A.B. and A.M. degrees, and, in spite of his studious habits and his aversion to the rough and wayward customs of student life, winning more and more, and at last having in full measure, the respect of his fellow-collegians. During these years he wrote, but did not publish, in Latin or English, no less than twenty-five pieces of verse, among them poems of no less note than the Nativity Ode, and the Sonnet on arriving at the age of twenty-three. The lines on Shakespeare were also composed in this period, and appeared in print among the poems prefixed to the second Shakespeare folio in 1632.

Returning, at the close of his university course, to the

paternal residence, the poet came, not to London, but to the village of Horton, in Buckinghamshire, where his father had taken a house in order to live in the country. Now had to be debated the question of a profession. Hitherto the son had seemed silently to acquiesce in the understood hope of the family that he would devote himself to a career in the church. But during his university years of study and observation his views had become fixed, his mind had advanced to self-determination, and he could not remain content with a future that seemed to hamper his intellectual freedom. This difference between father and son was settled, apparently without strife, by the elder man's entire yielding to the desires of the younger. The son could not, as we can well understand if we have read even only a little of his verse or his prose, be otherwise than strenuous, insistent, and masterful. To his father he was of course filial and respectful, we may imagine him even gentle; but conciliatory, yielding, the point being a vital one, it was not in his nature to be.

What the young Milton desired was to lead a life devoted to literature, or, more specifically, to poetry. This meant that he wished still to study a long time, to fathom all learning in all tongues. In college he had, besides Latin, mastered Greek, French, Italian, and Hebrew. His conception of a poet was of a most profoundly learned man. He had become aware of the existence of vast areas of knowledge that he had not yet explored. Other young men turned aside without misgiving from the ambition to know everything, and eagerly entered into useful and lucrative professions. But Milton scorns the thought of applying learning to the service of material gain. This is his poetical conception of his duty as a scholar. It will dominate the spirit of his life work. To understand his feelings at this time

both toward his father and toward his ideals, we must read the Latin poem *Ad Patrem*, of which Professor Masson gives an English translation.

At Horton, therefore, Milton remains, still subsisting on his father's bounty. Having come back thither at the age of twenty-three, he continues to live at home for nearly six years, not yet practising any art by which to earn a livelihood. Occasionally he goes, on scholarly errands, to London, which is not far distant. He devotes himself simply to study, and having the poetic temperament, he cannot help devoting himself also to observation of nature. His learning becomes immense; his appetite is insatiable.

To the Horton time belong the "minor poems" not already produced during the student years at Cambridge. Of the circumstances in which the several poems were written, an account is given in the Notes in this volume. This early, or minor, verse of Milton is elicited by passing events, and is considered to concern only himself and a few friends. For immediate fame he takes no thought. He feels his immaturity. His ambition contemplates a distant future, and he meditates plans, as yet undefined and vague, of some great work that the world shall not willingly let die.

Very important in Milton's intellectual development is his journey to France and Italy, on which he set out in April, 1638. As an indication of his social position in England, we must note that he carries with him letters of introduction which secure to him notice and recognition from men of rank or of notable literary and scientific standing. He goes abroad as a cultivated private gentleman, known to have achieved distinction as a student. Undoubtedly his chief qualification for holding his own in learned Italian society was his command of languages, especially of Latin, unless indeed we are to put before his linguistic accomplishments

the refined and gentlemanly personal bearing which was his birthright, and which, in his years of intense application to books, he had not forfeited. In Italy he associated with men whose intellectual interests were the universal ones of science, in which he was as much at home as they. Thus he possessed a perfect outfit of the endowments and the acquisitions which a traveller needs to make his travel fruitful to himself and honorable to his country.

In Italy he made friends among men of note, and established relations which were to have their importance in his future life. But most memorable among his Italian experiences was his visit to the aged Galileo, who was then a "prisoner to the Inquisition" for teaching that the earth moves round the sun. The modern astronomy was then winning its way among men of thought very much as the doctrine of evolution has been winning its way during the last half century. Few minds surrendered instantly and without misgiving to the new conception. Milton has still many years to meditate the question before he comes to the composition of Paradise Lost, when his scheme of the physical universe will have to recognize the requirements of poetic art and the prevalence of ancient beliefs regarding the origin and order of the cosmos. From the fact that the poet puts the earth in the centre of the universe, that he adopts, in fact, the Ptolemaic system, though he knew the Copernican, we are not entitled to infer that he held a fixed conviction in the matter, and that, on direct examination as to his views, he would have absolutely professed one theory and rejected the other. The poet has all rights of choice, and may be said to know best where to stand to take his view of the world.

Milton remained abroad some sixteen months, and was home again in August, 1639. The Horton household was

now broken up, the father going to live, first with his younger son, Christopher, at Reading, and afterward to spend his last years in the family of John in London where he died in 1647.

With his removal to London in 1639 a distinct period in Milton's life comes to an end. He has hitherto been uninterruptedly acquiring knowledge both by studious devotion to books and by observation of human life in foreign lands. He has read all the great literatures in ancient and modern languages. He has felt the poetic impulse and has proved to himself that he has at command creative power. His purpose still is to produce a poem. But this poem of his aspirations is distinctly a great and majestic affair, and not at all a continuation of such work as that which he has hitherto given to his friends, and which he esteems as prolusions of his youth.

The poetic waiting-time which Milton, now in full vigor of manhood, prescribes for himself, he is constrained, both by inner conviction and by external necessity, to fill with hard and earnest work. Henceforth, for a score of years, he ceases almost entirely to write verse, and he earns his living. He becomes a householder in London, where, as the father had gained his livelihood by drawing up contracts and mortgages for his fellow-citizens, the son proceeds to gain his by teaching their boys Latin.

To the work of teaching, Milton addressed himself with intelligence and predilection. About education he had ideas of his own which he applied in practice and advocated in writing. His Tract on Education is a document of importance in the history of pedagogy, and is, besides, one of those memorable pieces of English prose which every student of literature, whatever his professional aims, must include in his reading. He kept his school in his own

house, where he boarded some of his pupils. We could not imagine John Milton going into a great public school, like St. Paul's, to serve as under-teacher to one of the tyrannical head-masters of the day. The only school befitting his absolutely convinced and masterful spirit is one in which he reigns supreme. The great subject is Latin, and so thoroughly is Latin taught that finally other subjects are explained through the medium of this language. He had, himself, brought from his school and college days very decided discontent with the methods then in vogue. This discontent he expresses in language of peculiar energy and even harshness. He is a true reformer.

In 1643 Milton, then thirty-five years old, married Mary Powell, a girl of just half his own age, daughter of a royalist residing near Oxford. We must imagine this young wife as coming to preside, somewhat in the capacity of matron, over a family of boys held severely to their tasks of study by a master in whom the sense of humor was almost entirely lacking, and whose discipline was of the sternest. That she could not endure the situation was but natural. Very soon after the wedding she went home with the understanding that she was to make a short visit to her parents and sisters; but she did not return for two years. Her husband summoned her, but she would not come back. In 1645 she at last repented of her waywardness, sought reconciliation, and was forgiven. These two years had wrought a change in Mary Powell Milton. She was now ready to live with her husband, and did so till her death in 1652. She left him three daughters, the youngest of whom, Deborah, lived till 1723, and was known to Addison and his contemporaries, from whom she received distinguished honors.

In reading Milton we find that all the vicissitudes of his

life reflect themselves in his works, so that the political and social events in which he is personally concerned usurp his attention, color his views, and often become his themes. Thus he is not, like Shakespeare, a critic of the whole of humanity, but is usually an advocate or an accuser of the leaders in church and state and of the principles which they profess. He is by nature a partisan. All the energy of his mind goes into denunciation or vindication. His experience of wedded life made him an advocate of easier divorce, and determined in him a mood which expressed itself in writings that naturally brought upon him obloquy even from those who held him most in honor.

It would be most interesting to know something of the daily routine of Milton's school, to ascertain what his pupils knew and could do when he had done with them. But we must remember that during all the years of his teaching the great Revolution was in progress, that all men of thought were profoundly stirred on public questions, and that Milton himself was a politician and an eager partisan of the cause of Parliament. He did not consider himself a teacher finally and for good. His school did not develop into anything great or conspicuous, and never became an object of curiosity. While yet engaged in such teaching as he found to do, he had written the pamphlets on education and on divorce, and also the famous one entitled Areopagitica, a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing to the Parliament of England. This is the best worth reading of all his prose writings. The subject of it is perfectly intelligible still, and its English shows to perfection the qualities of the great Miltonic style.

After the execution of Charles I., Jan. 30, 1649, it became more than ever necessary for all thoughtful men to express their convictions. For a people to put to death its king by

judicial process was an unheard of event. Those who considered that the Parliament had acted within the law and could not have done otherwise with due regard to the welfare of the nation had to convince doubting and timid citizens at home, and also, so far as was possible, to placate critics in other nations who still believed that the king could do no wrong; for all Europe interested itself in this tremendous act of the English Parliament.

Within a fortnight after the death of the king, Milton published his pamphlet on The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates. This work so impressed the parliamentary leaders as a thorough and unanswerable argument in defence of their cause that they sought out its author, and in March appointed him to the important post of Secretary for Foreign Tongues. Milton's perfect command of Latin now stood him in good stead. Here was an uncompromising puritan, fully the equal of the foreign ecclesiastics in theology, and capable of holding his own in Latin composition with the most famous humanists of the time. Latin was then the language of international intercourse. Milton's duty was to translate into and from Latin the despatches that passed between his own and foreign governments. He also composed original treatises, some in English and some in Latin, the most important of which continued his justification of the national act of regicide. The importance of these writings was very great. Milton's services to the puritan cause can to-day hardly be appreciated. It was the constant aim of royalists at home and abroad to represent England as having fallen under the control of ignorant fanatics, of ambitious, barbarous, blood-thirsty men. By his very personality, his knowledge of affairs, his familiarity with ancient and mediæval history, and, above all, by his fluency in Latin invective, Milton thwarted attempts to disparage his countrymen as

lawless barbarians. He helped to maintain the good name of his country as a land of intellectual light and of respect for ancient usage. Foreigners who attempted personal vilification found him ready to meet them with their own weapons. The poet of Comus now shows himself a controversialist of unbounded energy.

In 1652, shortly before the death of his wife, Milton became totally blind. Henceforward the duties of his secretaryship had to be performed with the aid of an amanuensis. He continued, however, to fill the office till just before the end of the Protectorate in 1659. In November, 1656, he married Katharine Woodcocke, who lived but till March, 1658. She left an infant which died a month after the mother.

Milton's duties as Secretary for Foreign Tongues must have brought him, one would think, into some sort of personal relation with Cromwell and the other great parliamentary leaders. The poet leaves us in no doubt as to the high esteem in which he held these men. But no gossip of the time admits us to a glimpse of their intercourse with each other. It falls to Milton to eulogize Cromwell; it never came in Cromwell's way to put on record his estimate of Milton.

With the restoration of royalty in the person of Charles II., in 1660, Milton's public activity of course ceased, and the second period of his life comes to an end. We saw his first period devoted to preparation and to early essays in poetry, with the distinct conception that poetry was yet to be the great work of his life. In his second period he expresses himself in verse but rarely and briefly, but produces controversial prose, now in English, now in Latin. In this second period he works, as teacher or as public secretary, for payment, supporting himself and family. When the third

period begins, he loses all employment, goes into closest retirement, a widower with three daughters growing up from childhood, and devotes himself to the poetry that he has always contemplated as the object of his ambition. He has now been blind eight years.

In view of the conspicuous part that Milton had taken in defending the right of Parliament to bring a king to the scaffold, it is surprising that on the Restoration he was not included in the number of those marked out for the punishment of death. He was for some time undoubtedly in danger. Fortunately he was overlooked, or, perhaps, was purposely neglected as being henceforth harmless.

In February, 1663, he married his third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, who faithfully cared for him till his death in 1674.

During this last period of his life Milton composed and published his *major* poems, — Paradise Lost, 1667, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes, 1671. For Paradise Lost he received from his publisher five pounds in cash, with promise of five pounds when thirteen hundred copies should have been sold, and of two more payments, each of the same sum, when two more editions of the same size should have been disposed of.

The last years of his life Milton appears to have spent in comparative comfort. His three daughters had gone out to learn trades. It seems he had given them no education. It may be they showed no desire or aptitude for instruction. Far more probably, however, he took no interest in their education. His ideal of womanhood, as may be gathered from numerous passages in his poems, is as far as possible removed from the modern conception of sexual equality as to opportunity for education and for training to self-determination. He shared in this respect the views that

prevailed during his day in all classes of society, and he maintained these views as a parent no less than as the poet of Paradise.

Besides the poems named above as produced during this last period of his life, Milton published also in these years several prose works, which have now little value except as showing the bent and occupation of his mind. Among these may be named a small Latin Grammar, written in English, which he had composed long before, and a History of Britain to the Norman Conquest.

Though the immediate sale of Paradise Lost was not large, according to our ideas, it was yet sufficient to indicate a very respectable interest in the reading public of the day. We must remember that it appeared in the corrupt time of the Restoration, when the prevailing literary fashion was wholly adverse to seriousness and ideality. The age was spiritually degenerate. Milton himself considered that he lived "an age too late." The great poem had no royal or noble sponsors to give it vogue; yet it made its way. By no means had all minds become frivolous. The minor poems had been published by themselves in 1645. These had always had their readers. The prose pamphlets of the secretary for foreign tongues were, at least by a small class of observant persons, known to be the work of the author of Comus and Lycidas. There were not wanting men to take a sympathetic interest in the fate of the poet in his retirement, and to note the appearance of Paradise Lost as a literary event.

Thus it was that Milton lived to have some slight foretaste of the honor which two centuries have bestowed on his memory. Visitors came to see him in his modest dwelling in an unfashionable quarter of London. Foreigners occasionally came to satisfy their curiosity. Dryden, the

chief poet who wrote in the spirit of the Restoration, called to talk with the author of Paradise Lost, and to suggest improvements in the form of the poem, which he thought should be in rhyme. The recognition which the poet thus got in his lifetime is small only in comparison with the immense fame he has won since his death.

Milton has now become an object of the profoundest curiosity. His life has been investigated by Professor Masson, with a minute scrutiny into detail such as has been devoted to no other writer but Shakespeare. His works are perpetually reprinted in all imaginable forms, whether of cheapness or of sumptuous elegance. They are read as text-books in schools by hosts of youth. Our beliefs regarding the great themes of the sacred scriptures are so colored by the Miltonic epics that we hardly know to-day just what part of our conceptions we owe to the Bible and what to the poet. Next to the Shakespearean dramas, the poems of Milton are the largest single influence that knits the English-speaking race into one vast brotherhood.

All students of Milton have to acknowledge their indebtedness to Professor David Masson of Edinburgh, who has devoted years of labor to research in every department of Miltonic lore. Masson's great Life of Milton in Connexion with the History of his Time is far too bulky for use except for reference on special points. The index volume makes the enormous work accessible as occasion requires.

To his edition of the poetical works, Masson prefixes a life, which will suffice for all the needs likely to arise in school. Yet again, Masson is the writer of the article on Milton in the Encyclopædia Britannica, a most complete presentment of everything a student ordinarily needs to know.

In the series of Classical Writers is a little book, or primer, on Milton, written by Stopford A. Brooke.

In the English Men of Letters series, the Milton is the work of Mark Pattison.

The latest good account of Milton is the book entitled simply John Milton, by Walter Raleigh, professor at University College, Liverpool. This is a remarkably vigorous and illuminating piece of criticism.

Perhaps the most interesting writing on a Milton subject is the book by Mrs. Anne Manning, The Maiden and Married Life of Mary Powell (afterward Mrs. Milton), and the sequel thereto, Deborah's Diary. This the student must read with the full understanding that it is a work of fiction.

It is right to warn young readers against the natural tendency to give their time to critical and expository books and articles before they make acquaintance with originals. Almost every essayist of note has written on Milton. There is danger lest we accept opinions at second hand. The only opinions on Milton to which we have any right are those we form from our own reading of his works.

MILTON'S

MINOR POEMS

MILTON'S MINOR POEMS.

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

[Composed 1629.]

I.

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

II.

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heaven's high council-table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside, and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

III.

Say, Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,

To welcome him to this his new abode,
Now while the heaven, by the Sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

IV.

See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odors sweet!
Oh! run; prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honor first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the Angel Quire,
From out his secret altar touched with hallowed fire.

The Hymn.

I.

It was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature, in awe to him,
Had doffed her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the Sun, her lusty paramour.

II.

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,

The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

III.

But he, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace:
She, crowned with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

IV.

No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
The hooked chariot stood,
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

V.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began.
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,
Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,

Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

VI.

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warned them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

VII.

And, though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
The new-enlightened world no more should need:
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning axletree could bear.

VIII.

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they than
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below:
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

IX.

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet
As never was by mortal finger strook,
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

X.

Nature, that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat the Airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling:
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all Heaven and Earth in happier union.

XI.

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shamefaced Night arrayed;
The helmed cherubim
And sworded seraphim
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn quire,
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-born Heir.

XII.

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,

But when of old the Sons of Morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanced World on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

XIII.

Ring out, ye crystal spheres!
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
And let the bass of heaven's deep organ blow;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

XIV.

For, if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back and fetch the Age of Gold;
And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

XV.

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,

Throned in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

XVI.

But wisest Fate says No,
This must not yet be so;
The Babe yet lies in smiling infancy
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss,
So both himself and us to glorify:
Yet first, to those ychained in sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep.

XVII.

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang,
While the red fire and smouldering clouds outbrake:
The aged Earth, aghast
With terror of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the centre shake,
When, at the world's last session,
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

XVIII.

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
But now begins; for from this happy day
The Old Dragon under ground,
In straiter limits bound,
Not half so far casts his usurped sway,

And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

XIX.

The Oracles are dumb;
No voice or hideous hum
Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

XX.

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring, and dale
Edged with poplar pale,
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

XXI.

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
In urns, and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar power forgoes his wonted seat.

XXII.

Peor and Baälim
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-battered god of Palestine;
And mooned Ashtaroth,
Heaven's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine:
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn;
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn.

XXIII.

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue;
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

XXIV.

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings loud;
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest;
Nought but profoundest Hell can be his shroud;
In vain, with timbrelled anthems dark,
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipped ark.

XXV.

He feels from Juda's land
The dreaded Infant's hand;
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damned crew.

XXVI.

So, when the sun in bed,
Curtained with cloudy red,
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave,
And the yellow-skirted fays
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.

XXVII.

But see! the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest.
Time is our tedious song should here have ending:
Heaven's youngest-teemed star
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed Angels sit in order serviceable.

ON SHAKESPEARE. 1630.

WHAT needs my Shakespeare for his honored bones
The labor of an age in piled stones?
Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a livelong monument.
For whilst, to the shame of slow-endeavoring art
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make *us* marble with too much conceiving,
And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

L'ALLEGRO.

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born
In Stygian cave forlorn
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy!
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There, under ebon shades and low-browed rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.
But come, thou Goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,
And by men heart-easing Mirth;
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore:
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying,
There, on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.
Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful Jollity,
Quips and Cranks and wanton Wiles,
Nods and Becks and wreathed Smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;

Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it, as you go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;
And, if I give thee honor due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night,
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweet-briar or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin;
And to the stack, or the barn-door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
While the ploughman, near at hand,

Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip round it measures:
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim, with daisies pied;
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighboring eyes.
Hard by a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
Are at their savory dinner set
Of herbs and other country messes,
Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead.
Sometimes, with secure delight,
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid
Dancing in the chequered shade;

And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How Faery Mab the junkets eat.
She was pinched and pulled, she said;
And he, by Friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-laborers could not end;
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend,
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength,
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream,

On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild,
And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

IL PENSEROSO.

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,
The brood of Folly without father bred!
How little you bested,
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toys!
Dwell in some idle brain,
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
As thick and numberless
As the gay motes that people the sun-beams,
Or likest hovering dreams,
The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train.
But, hail! thou Goddess sage and holy!
Hail, divinest Melancholy!
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
Black, but such as in esteem
Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove
To set her beauty's praise above
The Sea-Nymphs, and their powers offended.
Yet thou art higher far descended:
Thee bright-haired Vesta long of yore
To solitary Saturn bore;
His daughter she; in Saturn's reign
Such mixture was not held a stain.
Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
He met her, and in secret shades
Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove.

Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,
All in a robe of darkest grain,
Flowing with majestic train,
And sable stole of cypress lawn
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.
Come; but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes:
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
And join with thee calm Peace and Quiet,
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing;
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
But, first and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The Cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist along,
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustomed oak.
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among

I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green,
To behold the wandering moon,
Riding near her highest noon,
Like one that had been led astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
I hear the far-off curfew sound,
Over some wide-watered shore,
Swinging slow with sullen roar;
Or, if the air will not permit,
Some still removed place will fit,
Where glowing embers through the room
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,
Far from all resort of mirth,
Save the cricket on the hearth,
Or the bellman's drowsy charm
To bless the doors from nightly harm.
Or let my lamp, at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook;
And of those demons that are found
In fire, air, flood, or underground,
Whose power hath a true consent
With planet or with element.

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine,
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.
But, O sad Virgin! that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower;
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek;
Or call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,
Of Camball, and of Algarsife,
And who had Canace to wife,
That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride;
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of turneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not tricked and frounced, as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kerchieft in a comely cloud,
While rocking winds are piping loud
Or ushered with a shower still,
When the gust hath blown his fill,
Ending on the rustling leaves,

With minute-drops from off the eaves.
And, when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,
Of pine, or monumental oak,
Where the rude axe with heaved stroke
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
There, in close covert, by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honeyed thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep.
And let some strange mysterious dream
Wave at his wings, in airy stream
Of lively portraiture displayed,
Softly on my eyelids laid;
And, as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen Genius of the wood.
But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,

In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give;
And I with thee will choose to live.

ARCADES.

Part of an Entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield by some Noble Persons of her Family; who appear on the Scene in pastoral habit, moving toward the seat of state, with this song:—

I. *Song.*

Look, Nymphs and Shepherds, look!
What sudden blaze of majesty
Is that which we from hence descry,
Too divine to be mistook?
This, this is she
To whom our vows and wishes bend:
Here our solemn search hath end.
Fame, that her high worth to raise
Seemed erst so lavish and profuse,
We may justly now accuse
Of detraction from her praise:
Less than half we find expressed;
Envy bid conceal the rest.

Mark what radiant state she spreads,
In circle round her shining throne
Shooting her beams like silver threads:
This, this is she alone,
Sitting like a goddess bright
In the centre of her light.

Might she the wise Latona be,
Or the towered Cybele,
Mother of a hundred gods?

Juno dares not give her odds:
Who had thought this clime had held
A deity so unparalleled?

As they come forward, THE GENIUS OF THE WOOD *appears, and, turning toward them, speaks.*

Gen. Stay, gentle Swains, for, though in this disguise,
I see bright honor sparkle through your eyes;
Of famous Arcady ye are, and sprung
Of that renowned flood, so often sung,
Divine Alpheus, who, by secret sluice,
Stole under seas to meet his Arethuse;
And ye, the breathing roses of the wood,
Fair silver-buskined Nymphs, as great and good.
I know this quest of yours and free intent
Was all in honor and devotion meant
To the great mistress of yon princely shrine,
Whom with low reverence I adore as mine,
And with all helpful service will comply
To further this night's glad solemnity,
And lead ye where ye may more near behold
What shallow-searching Fame hath left untold;
Which I full oft, amidst these shades alone,
Have sat to wonder at, and gaze upon.
For know, by lot from Jove, I am the Power
Of this fair wood, and live in oaken bower,
To nurse the saplings tall, and curl the grove
With ringlets quaint and wanton windings wove;
And all my plants I save from nightly ill
Of noisome winds and blasting vapors chill;
And from the boughs brush off the evil dew,
And heal the harms of thwarting thunder blue,
Or what the cross dire-looking planet smites,

Or hurtful worm with cankered venom bites.
When evening gray doth rise, I fetch my round
Over the mount, and all this hallowed ground;
And early, ere the odorous breath of morn
Awakes the slumbering leaves, or tasselled horn
Shakes the high thicket, haste I all about,
Number my ranks, and visit every sprout
With puissant words and murmurs made to bless.
But else, in deep of night, when drowsiness
Hath locked up mortal sense, then listen I
To the celestial Sirens' harmony,
That sit upon the nine infolded spheres,
And sing to those that hold the vital shears,
And turn the adamantine spindle round
On which the fate of gods and men is wound.
Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie,
To lull the daughters of Necessity,
And keep unsteady Nature to her law,
And the low world in measured motion draw
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear
Of human mould with gross unpurged ear.
And yet such music worthiest were to blaze
The peerless height of her immortal praise
Whose lustre leads us, and for her most fit,
If my inferior hand or voice could hit
Inimitable sounds. Yet, as we go,
Whate'er the skill of lesser gods can show
I will assay, her worth to celebrate,
And so attend ye toward her glittering state;
Where ye may all, that are of noble stem,
Approach, and kiss her sacred vesture's hem.

II. *Song.*

O'er the smooth enamelled green,
Where no print of step hath been,
  Follow me, as I sing
  And touch the warbled string:
Under the shady roof
Of branching elm star-proof
    Follow me.
I will bring you where she sits,
Clad in splendor as befits
    Her deity.
Such a rural Queen
All Arcadia hath not seen.

III. *Song.*

Nymphs and Shepherds, dance no more
  By sandy Ladon's lilied banks;
On old Lycæus, or Cyllene hoar,
  Trip no more in twilight ranks;
Though Erymanth your loss deplore,
  A better soil shall give ye thanks.
From the stony Mænalus
Bring your flocks, and live with us;
Here ye shall have greater grace,
To serve the Lady of this place.
Though Syrinx your Pan's mistress were,
Yet Syrinx well might wait on her.
  Such a rural Queen
  All Arcadia hath not seen.

AT A SOLEMN MUSIC.

BLEST pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ,
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce;
And to our high-raised phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure concent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-colored throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout and solemn jubilee;
Where the bright Seraphim in burning row
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow,
And the Cherubic host in thousand quires
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just Spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly:
That we on Earth, with undiscording voice,
May rightly answer that melodious noise;
As once we did, till disproportioned sin
Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.
O, may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long
To his celestial consort us unite,
To live with Him, and sing in endless morn of light!

COMUS.

A MASQUE PRESENTED AT LUDLOW CASTLE, 1634.

THE PERSONS.

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, afterwards in the habit of THYRSIS.
COMUS, with his Crew.
THE LADY.
FIRST BROTHER.
SECOND BROTHER.
SABRINA, the Nymph.

The first Scene discovers a wild wood.

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT *descends or enters.*

Spirit. Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call Earth, and, with low-thoughted care,
Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants
Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity.
To such my errand is; and, but for such,
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapors of this sin-worn mould.
But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway

Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,
Took in, by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove,
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadorned bosom of the deep;
Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government,
And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns
And wield their little tridents. But this Isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-haired deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun
A noble Peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state,
And new-intrusted sceptre. But their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of those shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril,
But that, by quick command from sovran Jove,
I was despatched for their defence and guard!
And listen why; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower.
Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell. (Who knows not Circe,
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup

Whoever tasted lost his upright shape,
And downward fell into a grovelling swine?)
This Nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks,
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth,
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named:
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields,
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And, in thick shelter of black shades imbowered,
Excels his mother at her mighty art;
Offering to every weary traveller
His orient liquor in a crystal glass,
To quench the drouth of Phœbus; which as they taste
(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst),
Soon as the potion works, their human count'nance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf or bear,
Or ounce or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
All other parts remaining as they were.
And they, so perfect in their misery,
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
But boast themselves more comely than before,
And all their friends and native home forget,
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
Therefore, when any favored of high Jove
Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star
I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,
As now I do. But first I must put off
These my sky-robes, spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain

That to the service of this house belongs,
Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
And in this office of his mountain watch
Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid
Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

COMUS *enters, with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistering. They come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands.*

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold
Now the top of heaven doth hold;
And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream:
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east.
Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odors, dropping wine.
Rigor now is gone to bed;
And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie.
We, that are of purer fire,

Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove,
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.
Come, let us our rites begin;
'Tis only daylight that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto, to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns! mysterious dame,
That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air!
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou ridest with Hecat', and befriend
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice Morn on the Indian steep,
From her cabined loop-hole peep,
And to the tell-tale Sun descry
Our concealed solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

The Measure.

Break off, break off! I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright. Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods! Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains: I shall ere long
Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion,
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course.
I, under fair pretence of friendly ends,
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may her business hear.

The LADY *enters.*

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now. Methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,

When, for their teeming flocks and granges full,
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loth
To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
Of such late wassailers; yet, oh! where else
Shall I inform my unacquainted feet
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favor of these pines,
Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket-side
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind-hospitable woods provide.
They left me then when the gray-hooded Even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain.
But where they are, and why they came not back,
Is now the labor of my thoughts. 'Tis likeliest
They had engaged their wandering steps too far;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me. Else, O thievish Night,
Why shouldst thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That Nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveller?
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,

And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.
O, welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemished form of Chastity!
I see thee visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honor unassailed. . . .
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err: there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.
I cannot hallo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture; for my new-enlivened spirits
Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

Song.

Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy airy shell
By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well:
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That likest thy Narcissus are?

O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where,
Sweet Queen of Parley, Daughter of the Sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies!

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen. — Hail, foreign wonder!
Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan or Sylvan, by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog

To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood.
Lady. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise
That is addressed to unattending ears.
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my severed company,
Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo
To give me answer from her mossy couch.
Comus. What chance, good Lady, hath bereft you thus?
Lady. Dim darkness and this leavy labyrinth.
Comus. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?
Lady. They left me weary on a grassy turf.
Comus. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?
Lady. To seek i' the valley some cool friendly spring.
Comus. And left your fair side all unguarded, Lady?
Lady. They were but twain, and purposed quick return.
Comus. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.
Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit!
Comus. Imports their loss, beside the present need?
Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.
Comus. Were they of manly prime, or youthful bloom?
Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.
Comus. Two such I saw, what time the labored ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinked hedger at his supper sat.
I saw them under a green mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon small hill,
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port was more than human, as they stood.
I took it for a faery vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colors of the rainbow live,
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-strook,
And, as I passed, I worshiped. If those you seek,

It were a journey like the path to Heaven
To help you find them.
Lady. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
Comus. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.
Lady. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.
Comus. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighborhood;
And, if your stray attendance be yet lodged,
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark
From her thatched pallet rouse. If otherwise,
I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
But loyal cottage, where you may be safe
Till further quest.
Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,
With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
And courts of princes, where it first was named,
And yet is most pretended. In a place
Less warranted than this, or less secure,
I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
To my proportioned strength! Shepherd, lead on. . . .

The Two Brothers.

Eld. Bro. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou, fair moon,
That wont'st to love the traveller's benison,
Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
In double night of darkness and of shades;
Or, if your influence be quite dammed up
With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
Of some clay habitation, visit us
With thy long levelled rule of streaming light,
And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Sec. Bro. Or, if our eyes
Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
The folded flocks, penned in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs.
But, Oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister!
Where may she wander now, whither betake her
From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
Leans her unpillowed head, fraught with sad fears.
What if in wild amazement and affright,
Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
Of savage hunger, or of savage heat!

Eld. Bro. Peace, brother: be not over-exquisite
To cast the fashion of uncertain evils;

For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
What need a man forestall his date of grief,
And run to meet what he would most avoid?
Or, if they be but false alarms of fear,
How bitter is such self-delusion!
I do not think my sister so to seek,
Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,
And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
As that the single want of light and noise
(Not being in danger, as I trust she is not)
Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,
And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,
Where, with her best nurse, Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That, in the various bustle of resort,
Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired.
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.

Sec. Bro. 'Tis most true
That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds,
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his gray hairs any violence?

But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit,
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope
Danger will wink on Opportunity,
And let a single helpless maiden pass
Uninjured in this wild surrounding waste.
Of night or loneliness it recks me not;
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister.

Eld. Bro. I do not, brother,
Infer as if I thought my sister's state
Secure without all doubt or controversy;
Yet, where an equal poise of hope and fear
Does arbitrate the event, my nature is
That I incline to hope rather than fear,
And gladly banish squint suspicion.
My sister is not so defenceless left
As you imagine; she has a hidden strength,
Which you remember not.

Sec. Bro. What hidden strength,
Unless the strength of Heaven, if you mean that?

Eld. Bro. I mean that too, but yet a hidden strength,
Which, if Heaven gave it, may be termed her own.
'Tis chastity, my brother, chastity:
She that has that is clad in complete steel,
And, like a quivered nymph with arrows keen,
May trace huge forests, and unharbored heaths,

Infamous hills, and sandy perilous wilds;
Where, through the sacred rays of chastity,
No savage fierce, bandite, or mountaineer,
Will dare to soil her virgin purity.
Yea, there where very desolation dwells,
By grots and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblenched majesty,
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost,
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time,
No goblin or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of chastity?
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen forever chaste,
Wherewith she tamed the brinded lioness
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity,
And noble grace that dashed brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,

And in clear dream and solemn vision
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal. But, when lust,
By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin,
Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchres,
Lingering and sitting by a new-made grave,
As loth to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself by carnal sensualty
To a degenerate and degraded state.
Sec. Bro. How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.
Eld. Bro. List! list! I hear
Some far-off hallo break the silent air.
Sec. Bro. Methought so too; what should it be?
Eld. Bro. For certain,
Either some one, like us, night-foundered here,
Or else some neighbor woodman, or, at worst,
Some roving robber calling to his fellows.
Sec. Bro. Heaven help my sister! Again, again, and near!
Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

Eld. Bro. I'll hallo.
If he be friendly, he comes well: if not,
Defence is a good cause, and Heaven be for us!

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *habited like a shepherd.*

That hallo I should know. What are you? speak.
Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else.
Spir. What voice is that? my young lord? speak again.
Sec. Bro. O brother, 'tis my father's Shepherd, sure.
Eld. Bro. Thyrsis! whose artful strains have oft delayed
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale.
How camest thou here, good swain? Hath any ram
Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?
How could'st thou find this dark sequestered nook?
Spir. O my loved master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, oh! my virgin Lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?
Eld. Bro. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without blame
Or our neglect, we lost her as we came.
Spir. Ay me unhappy! then my fears are true.
Eld. Bro. What fears, good Thyrsis? Prithee briefly shew.
Spir. I'll tell ye. 'Tis not vain or fabulous
(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,
Storied of old in high immortal verse
Of dire Chimeras and enchanted isles,

And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;
For such there be, but unbelief is blind.
Within the navel of this hideous wood,
Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,
Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,
Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries,
And here to every thirsty wanderer
By sly enticement gives his baneful cup,
With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage
Charactered in the face. This have I learnt
Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts
That brow this bottom glade; whence night by night
He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl
Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,
Doing abhorred rites to Hecate
In their obscurèd haunts of inmost bowers.
Yet have they many baits and guileful spells
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savory herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began,
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill. But ere a close
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And filled the air with barbarous dissonance;

At which I ceased, and listened them a while,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtained Sleep.
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death. But, oh! ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honored Lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear;
And 'O poor hapless nightingale,' thought I,
'How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!'
Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place
Where that damned wizard, hid in sly disguise
(For so by certain signs I knew), had met
Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey;
Who gently asked if he had seen such two,
Supposing him some neighbor villager.
Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed
Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
Into swift flight, till I had found you here;
But further know I not.

Sec. Bro. O night and shades,
How are ye joined with hell in triple knot
Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,

Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
You gave me, brother?
Eld. Bro. Yes, and keep it still;
Lean on it safely; not a period
Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
Of malice or of sorcery, or that power
Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm:
Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled;
Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm
Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.
But evil on itself shall back recoil,
And mix no more with goodness, when at last,
Gathered like scum, and settled to itself,
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed and self-consumed. If this fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on!
Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But for that damned magician, let him be girt
With all the griesly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to return his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.
Spir. Alas! good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise;
But here thy sword can do thee little stead.
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.

He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.
Eld. Bro. Why, prithee, Shepherd,
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this relation?
Spir. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprisal
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled
In every virtuous plant and healing herb
That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray.
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing;
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy,
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out.
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon;
And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.
He called it Hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovran use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp,
Or ghastly Furies' apparition.
I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compelled.
But now I find it true; for by this means

I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised,
Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off. If you have this about you
(As I will give you when we go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood
And brandished blade rush on him: break his glass,
And shed the luscious liquor on the ground;
But seize his wand. Though he and his curst crew
Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
Or, like the sons of Vulcan, vomit smoke,
Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis, lead on apace; I'll follow thee;
And some good angel bear a shield before us!

The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner of deliciousness: soft music, tables spread with all dainties. COMUS *appears with his rabble, and the* LADY *set in an enchanted chair: to whom he offers his glass; which she puts by, and goes about to rise.*

Comus. Nay, Lady, sit. If I but wave this wand,
Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster,
And you a statue, or as Daphne was,
Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

Lady. Fool, do not boast.
Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
Thou hast immanacled while Heaven sees good.

Comus. Why are you vexed, Lady? why do you frown?
Here dwell no frowns, nor anger; from these gates
Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures
That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.

And first behold this cordial julep here,
That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,
With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.
Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena
Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent
For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
But you invert the covenants of her trust,
And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
With that which you received on other terms,
Scorning the unexempt condition
By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
That have been tired all day without repast,
And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,
This will restore all soon.

Lady. 'Twill not, false traitor!
'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.
Was this the cottage and the safe abode
Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,
These oughly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me!
Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!
Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence
With vizored falsehood and base forgery?
And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
With liquorish baits, fit to ensnare a brute?
Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
I would not taste thy treasonous offer. None
But such as are good men can give good things;

And that which is not good is not delicious
To a well-governed and wise appetite.
Comus. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence!
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odors, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms,
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hutched the all-worshipped ore and precious gems,
To store her children with. If all the world
Should, in a fit of temperance, feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,
Not half his riches known, and yet despised;
And we should serve him as a grudging master,
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility:
The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with plumes,
The herds would over-multitude their lords;
The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought diamonds
Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below

Would grow inured to light, and come at last
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.
List, Lady; be not coy, and be not cozened
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin; must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof
Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavory in the enjoyment of itself.
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languished head.
Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship.
It is for homely features to keep home;
They had their name thence: coarse complexions
And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply
The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advised; you are but young yet.

Lady. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb.
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance. She, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance.

If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well-dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumbered with her store;
And then the Giver would be better thanked,
His praise due paid: for swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Crams, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enow? To him that dares
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of chastity
Fain would I something say; — yet to what end?
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul, to apprehend
The sublime notion and high mystery
That must be uttered to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginity;
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric,
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced.
Yet, should I try, the uncontrolled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence
That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

Comus. She fables not. I feel that I do fear

Her words set off by some superior power;
And, though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble,
And try her yet more strongly — Come, no more!
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation.
I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees
And settlings of a melancholy blood.
But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste . . .

The BROTHERS *rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out of his hand, and break it against the ground: his rout make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The* ATTENDANT SPIRIT *comes in.*

Spir. What! have you let the false enchanter scape?
O ye mistook; ye should have snatched his wand,
And bound him fast. Without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed and motionless.
Yet stay: be not disturbed; now I bethink me,
Some other means I have which may be used,
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.
There is a gentle Nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn stream:
Sabrina is her name: a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the sceptre from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit

Of her enraged stepdame, Guendolen,
Commended her fair innocence to the flood
That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall;
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectared lavers strewed with asphodel,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived,
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made Goddess of the river. Still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,
Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs
That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
Which she with precious vialed liquors heals:
For which the shepherds, at their festivals,
Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream
Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
If she be right invoked in warbled song;
For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift
To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
In hard-besetting need. This will I try,
And add the power of some adjuring verse.

Song.

Sabrina fair,
Listen where thou art sitting
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,

In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
Listen for dear honor's sake,
Goddess of the silver lake,
Listen and save!

Listen, and appear to us,
In name of great Oceanus,
By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
And Tethys' grave majestic pace;
By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
And the Carpathian wizard's hook;
By scaly Triton's winding shell,
And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell;
By Leucothea's lovely hands,
And her son that rules the strands;
By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,
And the songs of Sirens sweet;
By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
And fair Ligea's golden comb,
Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
By all the nymphs that nightly dance
Upon thy streams with wily glance;
Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
From thy coral-paven bed,
And bridle in thy headlong wave,
Till thou our summons answered have.
Listen and save!

SABRINA *rises, attended by Water-nymphs, and sings.*

By the rushy-fringed bank,
Where grow the willow and the osier dank,

My sliding chariot stays,
Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
That in the channel strays:
Whilst from off the waters fleet
Thus I set my printless feet
O'er the cowslip's velvet head,
That bends not as I tread.
Gentle swain, at thy request
I am here!

Spir. Goddess dear,
We implore thy powerful hand
To undo the charmed band
Of true virgin here distressed
Through the force and through the wile
Of unblessed enchanter vile.

Sabr. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
To help ensnared chastity.
Brightest Lady, look on me.
Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
Drops that from my fountain pure
I have kept of precious cure;
Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
Thrice upon thy rubied lip:
Next this marble venomed seat,
Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.
Now the spell hath lost his hold,
And I must haste ere morning hour
To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

SABRINA *descends, and the* LADY *rises out of her seat.*

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Locrine,

Sprung of old Anchises' line,
May thy brimmed waves for this
Their full tribute never miss
From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drouth or singed air
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crowned
With many a tower and terrace round,
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.
Come, Lady; while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound
Till we come to holier ground.
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide;
And not many furlongs thence
Is your Father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wished presence, and beside
All the swains that there abide
With jigs and rural dance resort.
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer.

Come, let us haste; the stars grow high,
But Night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow Town, and the President's Castle: then come the Country Dancers; after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, *with the* TWO BROTHERS *and the* LADY.

Song.

Spir. Back, shepherds, back! Enough your play
Till next sun-shine holiday.
Here be, without duck or nod,
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise
With the mincing Dryades
On the lawns and on the leas.

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother.

Noble Lord and Lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight.
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own.
Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual folly and intemperance.

The dances ended, the SPIRIT *epiloguizes.*

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,

Up in the broad fields of the sky.
There I suck the liquid air,
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree.
Along the crisped shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring;
The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours
Thither all their bounties bring.
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west winds with musky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purfled scarf can shew,
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound,
In slumbers soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.
But far above, in spangled sheen,
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced
Holds his dear Psyche, sweet entranced
After her wandering labors long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.

But now my task is smoothly done:
I can fly, or I can run
Quickly to the green earth's end,
Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend,
And from thence can soar as soon
To the corners of the moon.
Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free.
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

LYCIDAS.

In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637; and, by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height.

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
Compels me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.
Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse:
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favor *my* destined urn,
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!
For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
We drove a-field, and both together heard

What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute;
Tempered to the oaten flute
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long;
And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.

But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,
And all their echoes, mourn.
The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the white-thorn blows;
Such Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.
Ay me! I fondly dream
"Had ye been there," . . . for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal nature did lament,

When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?
Alas! what boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears:
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."
O fountain Arethuse, and thou honored flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the Herald of the Sea,
That came in Neptune's plea.
He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
And questioned every gust of rugged wings

That blows from off each beaked promontory.
They knew not of his story;
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed:
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.
Next, Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.
"Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"
Last came, and last did go,
The Pilot of the Galilean Lake;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake: —
"How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as, for their bellies' sake,
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!
Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,

Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said.
But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."
Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enamelled eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so, to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Ay me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled;
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,

Where the great Vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold.
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth:
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.
Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,
For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the Saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears forever from his eyes.
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
While the still morn went out with sandals gray:
He touched the tender stops of various quills,
With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:
And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
And now was dropt into the western bay.
At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

SONNETS.

I.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

O Nightingale that on yon bloomy spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still,
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly Hours lead on propitious May.
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love. O, if Jove's will
Have linked that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom, in some grove nigh;
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why.
Whether the Muse or Love called thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

II.

ON HIS HAVING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,

That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
Yet, be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

VIII.

WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED TO THE CITY.

Captain or Colonel, or Knight in Arms,
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
If deed of honor did thee ever please,
Guard them, and him within protect from harms.
He can requite thee; for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower:
The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground; and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.

IX.

TO A VIRTUOUS YOUNG LADY.

Lady, that in the prime of earliest youth
Wisely hast shunned the broad way and the green,
And with those few art eminently seen
That labor up the hill of heavenly Truth,
The better part with Mary and with Ruth
Chosen thou hast; and they that overween,
And at thy growing virtues fret their spleen,
No anger find in thee, but pity and ruth.
Thy care is fixed, and zealously attends
To fill thy odorous lamp with deeds of light,
And hope that reaps not shame. Therefore be sure
Thou, when the Bridegroom with his feastful friends
Passes to bliss at the mid-hour of night,
Hast gained thy entrance, Virgin wise, and pure.

X.

TO THE LADY MARGARET LEY.

Daughter to that good Earl, once President
Of England's Council and her Treasury,
Who lived in both unstained with gold or fee,
And left them both, more in himself content,
Till the sad breaking of that Parliament
Broke him, as that dishonest victory
At Chæronea, fatal to liberty,

Killed with report that old man eloquent,
Though later born than to have known the days
Wherein your father flourished, yet by you,
Madam, methinks I see him living yet:
So well your words his noble virtues praise
That all both judge you to relate them true
And to possess them, honored Margaret.

XIII.

TO MR. H. LAWES ON HIS AIRS.

Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured song
First taught our English music how to span
Words with just note and accent, not to scan
With Midas' ears, committing short and long,
Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng,
With praise enough for Envy to look wan;
To after age thou shalt be writ the man
That with smooth air couldst humor best our tongue.
Thou honor'st Verse, and Verse must send her wing
To honor thee, the priest of Phœbus' quire,
That tunest their happiest lines in hymn or story.
Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing,
Met in the milder shades of Purgatory.

XV.

ON THE LORD GENERAL FAIRFAX, AT THE SIEGE OF COLCHESTER.

Fairfax, whose name in arms through Europe rings,
Filling each mouth with envy or with praise,
And all her jealous monarchs with amaze,
And rumors loud that daunt remotest kings,
Thy firm unshaken virtue ever brings
Victory home, though new rebellions raise
Their Hydra heads, and the false North displays
Her broken league to imp their serpent wings.
O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand
(For what can war but endless war still breed?)
Till truth and right from violence be freed,
And public faith cleared from the shameful brand
Of public fraud. In vain doth Valor bleed,
While Avarice and Rapine share the land.

XVI.

TO THE LORD GENERAL CROMWELL, MAY, 1652,

ON THE PROPOSALS OF CERTAIN MINISTERS AT THE COMMITTEE FOR PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL.

Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud
Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast ploughed,
And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud
Hast reared God's trophies, and his work pursued,
While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots imbrued,

And Dunbar field, resounds thy praises loud,
And Worcester's laureate wreath: yet much remains
To conquer still; Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than War: new foes arise,
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains.
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw.

XVII.

TO SIR HENRY VANE THE YOUNGER.

Vane, young in years, but in sage counsel old,
Than whom a better senator ne'er held
The helm of Rome, when gowns, not arms, repelled
The fierce Epirot and the African bold,
Whether to settle peace, or to unfold
The drift of hollow states hard to be spelled;
Then to advise how war may best, upheld,
Move by her two main nerves, iron and gold,
In all her equipage; besides, to know
Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,
What severs each, thou hast learned, which few have done.
The bounds of either sword to thee we owe:
Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans
In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son.

XVIII.

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT.

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who, having learnt thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

XIX.

ON HIS BLINDNESS.

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"

I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

XX.

TO MR. LAWRENCE.

Lawrence, of virtuous father virtuous son,
Now that the fields are dank, and ways are mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
Help waste a sullen day, what may be won
From the hard season gaining? Time will run
On smoother, till Favonius reinspire
The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire
The lily and rose, that neither sowed nor spun.
What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of those delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

XXI.

TO CYRIACK SKINNER.

Cyriack, whose grandsire on the royal bench
Of British Themis, with no mean applause,
Pronounced, and in his volumes taught, our laws,
Which others at their bar so often wrench,
To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
In mirth that after no repenting draws;
Let Euclid rest, and Archimedes pause,
And what the Swede intend, and what the French.
To measure life learn thou betimes, and know
Toward solid good what leads the nearest way;
For other things mild Heaven a time ordains,
And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
That with superfluous burden loads the day,
And, when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains.

XXII.

TO THE SAME.

Cyriack, this three years' day these eyes, though clear.
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot

Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In Liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask
Content, though blind, had I no better guide.

XXIII.

ON HIS DECEASED WIFE.

Methought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from Death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom washed from spot of child-bed taint
Purification in the Old Law did save,
And such as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind.
Her face was veiled; yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear as in no face with more delight.
But, oh! as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night.

NOTES.

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY.

From his sixteenth year Milton had been wont to write freely in Latin verse, on miscellaneous poetic themes, sometimes expressing his thoughts on events of the day, and sometimes addressing letters to his friends on purely personal matters. From these Latin poems, which therefore in some sense belong to English literature, we obtain valuable insight into his course of life and his way of thinking. What Milton wrote in foreign languages is indispensable for the information it gives us about himself — its content is important; but as poetry implies a fusing of content and form into an artistic unity, if one of these elements is foreign, the result is nondescript and cannot be ranged under the head of English literature in the strict sense of the term.

It is in one of Milton's own Latin pieces that we find our best commentary on the Hymn on the Nativity. The sixth Latin Elegy is an epistle to his intimate college friend, "Charles Diodăti making a stay in the country," the last twelve lines of which may be freely translated as follows: —

But if you shall wish to know what I am doing, — if indeed you think it worth your while to know whether I am doing anything at all, — we are singing the peace-bringing king born of heavenly seed, and the happy ages promised in the sacred books, and the crying of the infant God lying in a manger under a poor roof, who dwells with his father in the realms above; and the starry sky, and the squadrons singing on high, and the gods suddenly driven away to their own fanes. Those gifts we have indeed given to the birthday of Christ; that first light brought them to me at dawn. Thee also they await sung to our native pipes; thou shalt be to me in lieu of a judge for me to read them to.

This means, of course, that the poet is composing a Christmas Hymn in his native language. We must note his age at this time, — twenty-one years: he is a student at Cambridge. The poem remains the great Christmas hymn in our literature. "The Ode on the Nativity," says Professor Saintsbury, "is a test of the reader's power to appreciate poetry."

In four stanzas the poet speaks in his own person: he too must, with the wise men from the east, bring such gifts as he has, to offer to the Infant God. His offering is the *humble ode* which follows. We must take note of the change in the metric form which marks the transition from the introduction to the ode. In the stanzas of the former the lines all have five accents, except the last, which has six; while in the latter, four lines have three accents each, one has four, two have five, and one has six. Notice also the occasional hypermetric lines, such as line 47.

In connection with Milton's Hymn, read Alfred Domett's *It was the calm and silent night.*

5. For so the holy sages once did sing. See Par. Lost XII 324.

6. our deadly forfeit should release. Compare Par. Lost III 221, and see the idea of *releasing a forfeit* otherwise expressed in the Merchant of Venice IV 1 24.

10. he wont. This is the past tense of the verb *wont*, meaning *to be accustomed.* See the present, Par. Lost I 764, and the participle, I 332.

15. thy sacred vein. See *vein* in the same sense, Par. Lost VI 628.

19. the Sun's team. Compare Comus 95, and read the story of Phaëthon in Ovid's Metamorphoses II 106.

24. prevent them with thy humble ode. See *prevent* in this sense, in Shakespeare's Julius Cæsar V 1 105, and in Psalm XXI 3.

28. touched with hallowed fire. See Acts II 3. On the meaning of **secret**, compare Par. Lost X 32.

41. Pollute is the participle, exactly equivalent to *polluted.*

48. the turning sphere. For poetical purposes Milton everywhere adopts the popular astronomy of his day, which was based on the ancient, *i.e.* the Ptolemaic, or geocentric system of the universe. Copernicus had already taught the modern, heliocentric theory of the

solar system, and his innovations were not unknown to Milton, who, however, consistently adheres to the old conceptions. In Milton, therefore, we find the earth the centre of the visible universe, while the sun, the planets, and the fixed stars revolve about it in their several *spheres*. These spheres are nine in number, arranged concentrically, like the coats of an onion, about the earth, and, if of solid matter, are to be conceived as being of perfectly transparent crystal. Beginning with the innermost, they present themselves in the following order: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the Fixed Stars, the Primum Mobile. In Par. Lost III 481, the ninth sphere appears as "that crystalline sphere whose balance weighs the trepidation talked," and the Primum Mobile, or the first moved, becomes the tenth and outermost of the series. The last two spheres contain no stars.

We see, then, what we must understand by the oft-recurring *spheres* in Milton's poetry. In the line, *Down through the turning sphere*, however, the singular *sphere* is obviously used to mean the whole aggregate of spheres composing the starry universe.

50. **With turtle wing.** With the wing of a turtle-dove.

56. **The hooked chariot.** War chariots sometimes had scythes, or hooks, attached to their axles. See 2 Maccabees XIII 2.

60. **sovran.** Milton always uses this form in preference to *sovereign*.

62. **the Prince of Light.** Note the corresponding epithet applied to Satan, Par. Lost X 383.

64. **The winds, with wonder whist.** The word *whist*, originally an interjection, becomes an adjective, as here and in The Tempest I 2 378.

66. Make three syllables of **Oceän**, and make it rhyme with *began*.

68. **birds of calm.** The birds referred to are doubtless halcyons. Dr. Murray defines halcyon thus: "A bird of which the ancients fabled that it bred about the time of the winter solstice in a nest floating on the sea, and that it charmed the wind and waves so that the sea was specially calm during the period; usually identified with a species of kingfisher, hence a poetic name of this bird."

71. **their precious influence.** The word *influence* is originally a term of astrology, — "a flowing in, or influent course, of the planets; their virtue infused into, or their course working on, inferior creatures" (Skeat, *Etym. Dict.*).

73. **For all the morning light.** As in Burns's "We dare be poor for a' that," *for* meaning in spite of.

74. **Lucifer.** See Par. Lost VII 131–133.

81. **As,** for *as if.*

86. **Or ere the point of dawn.** The two words *or ere* mean simply *before*, as in Hamlet I 2 147, "A little month, or ere those shoes were old." *The point of dawn* imitates the French *le point du jour.*

88. **Full little thought they than.** *Than* is an ancient form of *then*, not wholly obsolete in Milton's day.

89. **the mighty Pan.** The poet takes the point of view of the shepherds and uses the name of their special deity.

95. **by mortal finger strook.** Milton uses the three participle forms, *strook*, *struck*, and *strucken.*

98. **As all their souls in blissful rapture took.** The verb *take* has here the same meaning as in Hamlet I 1 163, "no fairy takes nor witch hath power to charm." Thus also we say, a vaccination takes.

103. **Cynthia's seat.** See Penseroso 59, and Romeo and Juliet III 5 20.

108. Make the line rhyme properly, giving to **union** three syllables.

112. **The helmed cherubim.** See Genesis III 24.

113. **The sworded seraphim.** See Isaiah VI 2–6.

116. **With unexpressive notes,** meaning beyond the power of human expression. So in Lycidas 176; Par. Lost V 595; and in As You Like It, "the fair, the chaste, and inexpressive she."

119. **But when of old the Sons of Morning sung.** See Job XXXVIII 7.

124. **the weltering waves.** Compare Lycidas 13.

125. **Ring out, ye crystal spheres.** See note, line 48. The elder poetry is full of the notion that the spheres in their revolutions made music, which human ears are too gross to hear. See Merchant of Venice V 1 50–65.

136. **speckled Vanity.** The leopard that confronts Dante in Canto I of *Hell* is beautiful with its dappled skin, but symbolizes vain glory.

143. **like glories wearing.** The adjective *like* means nothing without a complement, though the complement sometimes has to be supplied, as in this instance. Fully expressed the passage would be, — *wearing glories like those of Truth and Justice.* The *like* in such a case as this must be spoken with a fuller tone than when its construction is completely expressed.

155. those ychained in sleep. The poets, in order to gain a syllable, long continued to use the ancient participle prefix *y*. See *yclept*, Allegro 12.

157. With such a horrid clang. See Exodus XIX.

168. The Old Dragon. See Revelation XII 9.

173. Stanzas XIX–XXVI announce the deposition and expulsion of the pagan deities, and the ruin of the ancient religions. In accordance with his custom of grouping selected proper names in abundance, thus giving vividness and concreteness to his story and sonority to his verse, the poet here illustrates the triumph of the new dispensation by citing the names of various gods from the Roman, Greek, Syrian, and Egyptian mythologies.

176. Apollo, the great god, whose oracle was at Delphi, or Delphos.

179. spell, as in Comus 853, and often.

186. Genius. A Latin word, signifying a tutelary or guardian spirit supposed to preside over a person or place. See Lycidas 183, and Penseroso 154.

191. The Lars and Lemures. In the Roman mythology these were the spirits of dead ancestors, worshipped or propitiated in families as having power for good or evil over the fortunes of their descendants.

194. Affrights the flamens. The Roman flamens were the priests of particular gods.

195. the chill marble seems to sweat. Many instances of this phenomenon are reported. Thus Cicero, in his *De Divinatione*, tells us: "It was reported to the senate that it had rained blood, that the river Atratus had even flowed with blood, and that the statues of the gods had sweat."

197. Peor and Baälim. Syrian false gods. See Numbers XXV 3.

199. that twice-battered god of Palestine. See I Samuel V 2.

200. mooned Ashtaroth. See I Kings XI 33.

203. The Lybic Hammon. "Hammon had a famous temple in Africa, where he was adored under the symbolic figure of a ram."

204. their wounded Thammuz. See Ezekiel VIII 14.

205. sullen Moloch. See Par. Lost I 392–396.

210. the furnace blue. Compare Arcades 52.

212. Isis, and Orus, and the dog Anubis. Egyptian deities, the latter figured as having the head of a dog.

213. Nor is Osiris seen. Osiris was the principal god of the Egyp-

tians, brother and husband of Isis. His highest function was as god of the Nile. He met his death at the hands of his brother Typhon, a deity of sterility, by whom he was torn into fourteen pieces. Thereupon a general lament was raised throughout Egypt. The bull Apis was regarded as the visible incarnation of Osiris. — *Murray's Manual of Mythology.*

215. **the unshowered grass.** Remember, this was in Egypt.

223. **his dusky eyn.** This ancient plural of eye occurs several times in Shakespeare, as in As You Like It IV 3 50.

240. **Heaven's youngest-teemed star.** Compare Comus 175.

241. **Hath fixed her polished car.** *Fix* has its proper meaning, *stopped.* The star "came and stood over where the young child was."

ON SHAKESPEARE.

The first edition of the collected works of Shakespeare, known as the first folio, was published in 1623, when Milton was fifteen years old. The second Shakespeare folio appeared in 1632. Among the commendatory verses by various hands prefixed, after the fashion of the time, to the latter volume, was a little piece of eight couplets, in which some then unknown rhymer expressed his admiration of the great poet. Collecting his poems for publication in 1645, Milton included these couplets, gave them the date 1630, and the title *On Shakespeare* which they have since borne in his works. The fact that he wrote the verses two years before their publication in the Shakespeare folio shows that he did not produce them to order, for the special occasion. It is interesting to note that Milton at twenty-two was an appreciative reader of Shakespeare. The lines themselves give no hint of great poetic genius; they are a fair specimen of the conventional, labored eulogy in vogue at the time.

4. **star-ypointing.** To make the decasyllable verse, the poet takes the liberty of prefixing to the present participle the *y* which properly belongs only to the past.

8. **a livelong monument.** Instead of *livelong*, the first issue of the lines, in the Shakespeare folio of 1632, has *lasting.* The change is Milton's, appearing in his revision of his poems in 1645. Does it seem to be an improvement?

10–12. and that each heart hath . . . took. The conjunction *that* simply repeats the *whilst*.

11. thy unvalued book. In Hamlet I 3 19 *unvalued persons* are persons of no value, or of no rank. In Macbeth III 1 94 the *valued file* is the file that determines values or ranks. In Milton's phrase the *unvalued book* means the book whose merit is so great as to be beyond all valuation: a new rank must be created for it.

12. Those Delphic lines: lines so crowded with meaning as to seem the utterances of an oracle.

13. our fancy of itself bereaving: transporting us into an ecstasy, or making us rapt with thought.

14. Dost make *us* marble with too much conceiving. The concentrated attention required to penetrate Shakespeare's meaning makes statues of us.

15. Make the word **sepulchred** fit metrically into the iambic verse.

L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO.

The year in which the poems were composed is uncertain. Masson regards 1632 as the probable date.

The exquisite poems to which Milton gave the Italian titles L'Allegro, — the mirthful, or jovial, man, — and Il Penseroso, — the melancholy, or saturnine, man, — should be regarded each as the pendant and complement of the other, and should be read as a single whole. The poet knew both moods, and takes both standpoints with equal grace and heartiness. The essential idea of thus contrasting the mirthful and the melancholy temperament he found ready to his hand. Robert Burton had prefaced his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, published in 1621, with a series of not unpleasing, though by no means graceful, amœbean stanzas, in which two speakers alternately represent Melancholy, one as sweet and divine, and the other as harsh, sour, and damned. Undoubtedly Milton knew his Burton. But if he got his main idea from this source, he made his poems thoroughly Miltonic by his art of visualizing in delicious pictures the various phases of his abstract theme. The poems are wholly poetical, equally free from obscurity of thought and from obscurity of expression.

Each poem is prefaced with a vigorous exorcism of the spirit to

which it is hostile. This is couched in alternate three and five accent iambics, preparing a delicious rhythmic effect when the metre changes, in the invocation, to the octosyllable, with or without anacrusis.

In L'Allegro we accompany the mirthful man through an entire day of his pleasures, from early morning to late evening. The melancholy man moves through a programme less definitely and regularly planned. The scenes of his delights are mostly in the hours of the night: when the sun is up, he hides himself from day's garish eye.

L'ALLEGRO.

2. **Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born.** Milton follows the example of the ancient poets in announcing the parentage of the principal beings whom he brings upon his stage. Moreover, he uses the ancient freedom in assigning mythical pedigrees, not only adopting no authority as a canon, but allowing his own fancy to invent origins as suits his purpose. He knew the Greek and Latin poets, and assumed for himself the privilege which they exercised of shaping the myths as they pleased. We are not therefore to seek in Milton a reproduction of any system of mythology. *Cerberus* was the terrible three-headed dog of Pluto. His station was at the entrance to the lower world, or the *Stygian cave*.

3. The **Stygian cave** is so called from the Styx, the infernal river, "the flood of deadly hate."

5. **some uncouth cell.** *Uncouth* may be used here in its original sense of *unknown*, as in Par. Lost VIII 230.

10. **In dark Cimmerian desert.** The Cimmerians were a people fabled by the ancients to live in perpetual darkness.

12. **yclept** is the participle of the obsolete verb *clepe*, with the ancient prefix *y*, as in ychained, Hymn on the Nativity 155.

15. **two sister Graces more.** Hesiod names, as the three Graces, Euphrosyne, Aglaia, and Thalia, but he makes them the daughters of Zeus and Eurynome.

18. **The frolic wind.** See *frolic* again as an adjective, Comus 59.

24. **So buxom, blithe, and debonair.** See Shakespeare's Pericles, I Gower 23. All these words are interesting to look up for etymologies and changes of meaning.

25–36. We readily accept and understand the personification of

Jest, Jollity, Sport, Laughter, and **Liberty**, but the plurals, **Quips, Cranks, Wiles, Nods, Becks. Smiles**, we do not manage quite so easily, especially in view of the couplet 29–30.

28. **Smiles** may be said to be **wreathed** because they inwreathe the face. See Par. Lost III 361.

33. **trip it, as you go.** So in Shakespeare, "I'll queen it no inch further; Rather than fool it so; I'll go brave it at the court, lording it in London streets."

41. With this line begins a series of illustrations of the *unreproved pleasures* which L'Allegro is going to enjoy during a day of leisure. At first the specified pleasures or occupations are introduced by infinitives, *to hear, to come;* but the construction soon changes, as we shall see. The first pleasure is **To hear the lark**, etc. 41–44. L'Allegro begins his day with early morning. Here we must imagine him as having risen and gone forth where he can see the sky and can look about him to see what is going on in the farm-yard.

45–46. **Then to come, in spite of sorrow,**
And at my window bid good-morrow.

It must be L'Allegro himself who comes to the window, and as he is outside, he comes to look in through the shrubbery and bid good morning to the cottage inmates, who are now up and about their work. The pertinency of the phrase, *in spite of sorrow*, is not intelligible.

53. **Oft listening how the hounds and horn.** This "pleasure" and the next — *sometime walking* — are introduced with present participles. There is no interruption of grammatical consistency.

57. **Sometime walking, not unseen.** See the counterpart of this line, Penseroso 65. Todd quotes the note of Bishop Hurd, — "Happy men love witnesses of their joy: the splenetic love solitude."

59. **against,** *i.e.* toward.

62. **The clouds in thousand liveries dight.** *Dight* is the participle of the verb *to dight*, meaning to adorn. It is still used as an archaism.

67. **And every shepherd tells his tale.** This undoubtedly means *counts the number* of his flock. In Shakespeare we find, to *tell* money, years, steps, a hundred. So *tale* often means an enumeration, a number. L'Allegro finds the shepherds in the morning counting their sheep, not telling stories.

68. With this line ends the long, loose sentence that began with line 37. We now come to a full stop, and with line 69 begin a new sentence.

70. **the landskip.** A word of late origin in English, of unsettled spelling in Milton's day.

71. **Russet lawns.** In Milton, *lawn* means field or pasture. See Lycidas 25.

77. In this line the subject, *mine eye*, is resumed.

80. **The cynosure of neighboring eyes.** In the constellation Cynosure, usually called the Lesser Bear, is the pole-star, to which very many eyes are directed.

81. A new "pleasure" is introduced, with a new grammatical subject.

83. **Where Corydon and Thyrsis met.** The proper names in lines 83–88 add to the poem a pleasing touch of pastoral simplicity and cheerfulness. They are taken from the common stock of names, which, originally devised by the Greek idyllists for their shepherds and shepherdesses, have by the pastoral poets of all subsequent ages been appropriated to their special use. Corydon and Thyrsis stand for farm-laborers, Phyllis and Thestylis for their wives or housekeepers. The day of L'Allegro has now advanced to dinner-time. Phyllis has been preparing the frugal meal, as we could surmise from the smoking chimney. As soon as the dinner is over the women go out to work with the men in the harvest field.

87. **bower** means simply *dwelling*.

90. In the **tanned haycock** we see the hay dried and browned by the sun.

91. The scene changes and brings yet another "pleasure." **secure delight** is delight without care, *sine cura*. See Samson Agonistes 55.

96. **in the chequered shade.** They danced under trees through whose foliage the sunlight filtered.

99. Evening comes on, and a new pleasure succeeds. Story-telling is now in order.

102. Sufficient information about **Faery Mab** can be got from Romeo and Juliet I 4 53–95.

103–104. **She**, *i.e.* one of the maids; **And he**, — one of the youths. The **Friar's lantern** is the ignis fatuus, or will-o'-the-wisp, fabled to lead men into dangerous marshes.

105. A connective is lacking to make the syntax sound: the subject of **tells** must be *he*. **the drudging goblin.** This is Robin Goodfellow, known to readers of fairy tales. Ben Jonson makes him a character in his Court Masque, Love Restored, where he is made to

recount many of his pranks, and says, among other things, "I am the honest plain country spirit, and harmless, Robin Goodfellow, he that sweeps the hearth and the house clean, riddles for the country maids, and does all their other drudgery."

109. could not end. Dr. Murray gives this among other quotations as an instance of the verb *end* meaning *to put into the barn, to get in.* So in Coriolanus V 6 37.

110. the lubber fiend. This goblin is loutish in shape and fiendish-looking, though so good to those who treat him well.

115. Thus done the tales. An absolute construction, imitating the Latin ablative absolute.

117. The country folk having gone early to bed, tired with their day's labor, L'Allegro hastes to the city, where the pleasures of life are prolonged further into the night.

120. In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold. This must mean such things as masques and revelries among the upper classes.

122. Rain influence. See note on Hymn on the Nativity 71.

124. What is the antecedent of **whom**?

125. What ceremony is here introduced?

128. Do not misunderstand the word **mask.** Its meaning becomes plain from the context.

131. To what pleasure does L'Allegro now betake himself?

132. Among the dramatists of the Jacobean time **Ben Jonson** had especially the repute of scholarship. The **sock** symbolizes comedy, as the buskin does tragedy. Compare Il Penseroso 102.

133–134. Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

The couplet seems intended to convey the idea of a counterpart or contrast to the *learned sock* of Jonson. So considered, it is by no means an unhappy characterization.

135. The last of the "unreproved pleasures" that L'Allegro wishes he may enjoy, seems not so much planned to follow the rest in sequence of time as to accompany them and be diffused through them all. Observe the **ever** in this line. The **eating cares** are a reminiscence of Horace's *curas edaces*, Ode II 11 18.

136. Lap me in soft Lydian airs. The three chief modes, or moods, of Greek music were the *Lydian*, which was soft and pathetic; the *Dorian*, especially adapted to war (see Par. Lost 550); and the *Phrygian*, which was bold and vehement.

138. **the meeting soul.** The soul, in its eagerness, goes forth to meet and welcome the music.

139. The word **bout** seems to point at a piece of music somewhat in the nature of a round, or catch.

145. **That Orpheus' self may heave his head.** Even Orpheus, who in his life "drew trees, stones, and floods" by the power of his music, and who now reposes in Elysium, would lift his head to listen to the strains that L'Allegro would fain hear.

149. Orpheus, with *his* music, had succeeded in obtaining from Pluto only a conditional release of his wife Eurydice. He was not to look back upon her till he was quite clear of Pluto's domains. He failed to make good the condition, and so again lost his Eurydice.

IL PENSEROSO.

3. **How little you bested.** The verb *bested* means *to avail, to be of service.* It is not the same word that we find in Isaiah VIII 21, "hardly bestead and hungry."

6. **fond** here has its primitive meaning, *foolish.* Understand **possess** in the sense in which it is used in the Bible, — "possessed with devils."

10. Make two syllables of **Morpheus.**

12. Note that while he invoked Mirth in L'Allegro under her Greek name Euphrosyne, the poet finds no corresponding Greek designation for **Melancholy.** To us Melancholy seems a name unhappily chosen. But see how Milton applies it in line 62 below, and in Comus 546. To him the word evidently connotes pensive meditation rather than gloomy depression.

14. **To hit the sense of human sight:** to be gazed at by human eyes.

18. **Prince Memnon** was a fabled Ethiopian prince, black, and celebrated for his beauty. Recall Virgil's *nigri Memnonis arma.*

19. **that starred Ethiop queen.** Cassiopeia, wife of the Ethiopian king Cepheus, boasted that she was more beautiful than the Nereids, for which act of presumption she was translated to the skies, where she became the beautiful constellation which we know by her name.

23. **bright-haired Vesta.** *Vesta* — in Greek, Hestia — "was the goddess of the home, the guardian of family life. Her spotless purity fitted her peculiarly to be the guardian of virgin modesty."

30. **Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove,** *i.e.* before Saturn was dethroned by Jupiter.

33. All in a robe of darkest grain. In Par. Lost V 285, the third pair of Raphael's wings have the color of *sky-tinctured grain;* and XI 242, his vest is of purple livelier than "the grain of Sarra," or Tyrian purple. This would leave us to infer that the robe of Melancholy is of a deep rich color, so dark as to be almost black. Dr. Murray quotes from Southey's *Thalaba*, "The ebony . . . with darkness feeds its boughs of raven grain." What objection is there to making the *grain* in Milton's passage *black?*

35. And sable stole of cypress lawn. Dr. Murray thus defines *cypress lawn*, "A light transparent material resembling cobweb lawn or crape; like the latter it was, when black, much used for habiliments of mourning."

37. Come; but keep thy wonted state. Compare with this passage, L'Allegro 33.

40. Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes. In Cymbeline I 6 51 we find the present tense of the verb of which *rapt* is the participle: "What, dear Sir, thus raps you?" Do not confound this word with *rap*, meaning to strike.

42. Forget thyself to marble. With this compare On Shakespeare 14.

43. With a sad leaden downward cast. So in Love's Labor's Lost IV 3 321, "In leaden contemplation;" Othello III 4 177, "I have this while with leaden thoughts been pressed." So also Gray in the Hymn to Adversity, "With leaden eye that loves the ground."

45-55. Compare the company which Il Penseroso entreats Melancholy to bring along with her with that which L'Allegro wishes to see attending Mirth.

46. Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet. Only the rigid ascetic has a spiritual ear so finely trained that he hears the celestial music.

48. Aye, as their rhymes show, is always pronounced by the poets with the vowel sound in *day*.

53. the fiery-wheeled throne. See Daniel VII 9.

54. The Cherub Contemplation. Pronounce *contemplation* with five syllables. It is difficult to form a distinct conception of the nature and office of the *cherub* of the Scriptures. Milton in many passages of Par. Lost follows, with regard to the heavenly beings, the account given by Dionysius the Areopagite in his Celestial Hierarchy. According to Dionysius there were nine orders or ranks of beings in

heaven, namely, — seraphim, cherubim, thrones, dominions, virtues, powers, principalities, archangels, angels. The cherubim have the special attribute of knowledge and contemplation of divine things.

55. **hist**, primarily an interjection commanding silence, becomes here a verb.

56. With the introduction of the nightingale comes the first intimation of the time of day at which Il Penseroso conceives the course of his satisfactions to begin.

57. Everywhere else in Milton **plight** is used with its modern connotations.

59. The moon stops to hear the nightingale's song.

65. Remember L'Allegro's *not unseen.*

77. Up to this point Il Penseroso has been walking in the open air.

78. **removed**, — remote, retired.

87. As **the Bear** never sets, to **outwatch** him must mean to sit up all night.

88. **With thrice great Hermes.** "Hermes Trismegistos — Hermes thrice-greatest — is the name given by the Neo-Platonists and the devotees of mysticism and alchemy to the Egyptian god Thoth, regarded as more or less identified with the Grecian Hermes, and as the author of all mysterious doctrines, and especially of the secrets of alchemy." (The *New Eng. Dicty.*) To such studies the serious mediæval scholars devoted themselves. To **unsphere the spirit of Plato** is to call him from the sphere in which he abides in the other world, or, simply, to take in hand for study his writings on immortality.

93–96. On the four classes of **demons**, — Salamanders, Sylphs, Nymphs, Gnomes, — see Pope's Rape of the Lock. These demons are in complicity with the planets and other heavenly bodies to influence mortals.

97–102. **Thebes, Pelops' line**, and **the tale of Troy** are the staple subjects of the great Attic tragedians. It seems strange that the poet finds no occasion to name Shakespeare here, as well as in L'Allegro.

104–105. **Musæus** and **Orpheus** are semi-mythical bards, to whom is ascribed a greatness proportioned to their obscurity.

105–108. See note on L'Allegro, 149.

109–115. **Or call up him that left half-told.** This refers to Chaucer and to his Squieres Tale in the Canterbury Tales. It is left unfinished. Note that Milton changes not only the spelling but the

accent of the chief character's name. Chaucer writes, "This noble king was cleped Cambinskan."

120. Stories in which **more is meant than meets the ear** refer to allegories, like the Fairy Queen.

121. Having thus filled the night with the occupations that he loves, Il Penseroso now greets the morning, which he hopes to find stormy with wind and rain.

122. **civil-suited Morn**: *i.e.* Morn in the everyday habiliments of business.

123–124. Eos — Aurora, the Dawn — carried off several youths distinguished for their beauty. **the Attic boy** is probably Cephalus, whom she stole from his wife Procris.

125. **kerchieft in a comely cloud.** *Kerchief* is here used in its original and proper sense. Look up its origin.

126. The winds may be called **rocking** because they visibly rock the trees, or because they shake houses.

127. **Or ushered with a shower still.** The shower falls gently, without wind.

130. **With minute-drops from off the eaves.** After the rain has ceased, and while the thatch is draining, the drops fall at regular intervals for a time, — as it were, a drop every minute. Il Penseroso listens with contentment to the wind, the rustling rain-fall on the leaves, and the monotonous patter of the drops when the rain is over.

131. The shower is past, and the sun appears, but Il Penseroso finds its beams flaring and distasteful. He seeks covert in the dense groves.

134. **Sylvan** is the god of the woods.

135. The **monumental oak** is so called from its great age and size.

140. Consciously nursing his melancholy, Il Penseroso deems the wood that hides him a sacred place, and resents intrusion as a profanation.

141. **Hide me from day's garish eye.** See Richard III. IV 4 89, Romeo and Juliet III 2 25.

142. **While the bee with honeyed thigh.** Is this good apiology?

146. **Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep.** Note that sleep is represented as having feathers. These feathers, in their soft, gentle movement and in their refreshing effect are likened to dew. The figure is a common one with the poets. In Par. Lost IX 1044, Milton has, — "till dewy sleep oppressed them." Cowper, Iliad II, 41, has, — "Awaking from thy dewy slumbers."

148. **his** refers to the *dewy-feathered sleep*. Il Penseroso asks that a strange, mysterious dream, hovering close by the wings of sleep, and lightly pictured in a succession of vivid forms, may be laid on his eyelids.

155–166. The word **studious** in line 156 determines that the passage refers to college life and not to church attendance. The old English colleges have their cloisters, and these have much the same architectural features as do churches.

157. **embowed** means vaulted, or bent like a *bow*.

158. **massy-proof**: massive and proof against all failure to support their load.

159. **And storied windows richly dight.** Compare L'Allegro, 62.

170. The best possible comment on this use of the verb **spell** is Milton's own language, Par. Regained IV 382, where Satan, addressing the Son of God, thus speaks: —

> Now, contrary, if I read aught in Heaven,
> Or Heaven write aught of fate, by what the stars
> Voluminous, or single characters
> In their conjunction met, give me to spell,
> Sorrows and labors, opposition, hate,
> Attends thee; scorns, reproaches, injuries,
> Violence and stripes, and, lastly, cruel death.

Il Penseroso's aspiration is that as an astrologer he may learn the influence of every star and that he may come to know the virtue of every herb.

ARCADES.

The noble persons of the family of the Countess Dowager of Derby were fortunate enough to obtain the services of the poet John Milton to aid in the composition of a mask, which they presented to her ladyship at her residence in the country. Arcades — the Arcadians — is Milton's contribution to this performance. In date the poem precedes Comus, which is known to have been composed in 1634.

On the meaning of the term *mask*, as applied to a dramatic form, see introductory note on Comus.

20. **Latona** (or Leto) was the mother of Apollo and Diana by Zeus.

21. **the towered Cybele** is Virgil's Berecyntia Mater, the Phrygian mother, who, wearing her mural crown, drives in her chariot through

the cities of Phrygia. She was conceived as one of the very oldest deities, and as mother of a hundred gods. See Æneid VI 785.

28. **Of famous Arcady ye are.** Arcadia, in the Peloponnesus, was peculiarly the home of music and song, especially among the shepherds. See Virgil, Eclogue VII 4–5.

30. **Divine Alpheus.** See note on Lycidas 132.

46. **curl the grove**: bestow upon the grove dense, crisp foliage.

47. **With ringlets quaint and wanton windings wove.** The grove is intersected with a maze of circling and purposeless paths.

49. **noisome**: full of annoyance, injurious. See Par. Lost XI 478.

blasting vapors. See note on Comus 640.

51. **thwarting thunder blue.** Compare Julius Cæsar I 3 50, "the cross blue lightning."

52. **the cross dire-looking planet.** Cross means *adverse, unfavorable.* See note on *influence*, Hymn on the Nativity 71.

54. **evening gray.** See note on Lycidas 187.

60. **murmurs.** Compare Comus 526.

63. **the celestial Sirens' harmony.** The Sirens are here advanced to a high function and given a new Epithet. Compare Comus 253.

64. **the nine infolded spheres.** See note on Hymn on Nativity 48.

65–66. See note on Lycidas 75.

69. **the daughters of Necessity**: the Fates.

72–73. **which none can hear Of human mould with gross unpurged ear.** Compare Merchant of Venice V 1 64.

87. **touch the warbled string**: the string that is accompanied with the voice. See Il Penseroso 106.

97. **Ladon**, a river of Arcadia, flowing into the Alpheus.

98. **Lycæus** and **Cyllene**, mountains of Arcadia.

100. **Erymanth.** Erymanthus is a range of mountains separating Arcadia from Achaia and Elis.

102. **Mænalus**, another mountain of Arcadia.

106. **Though Syrinx your Pan's mistress were.** Syrinx was an Arcadian nymph, who, being pursued by Pan, threw herself into the Ladon, where she was metamorphosed into a reed, of which the shepherds thereafter made their pipes.

AT A SOLEMN MUSIC.

The poet listens to what in the phrase of his time is a *solemn music*, but which we should name a sacred concert. The poem is

unalloyed lyric, expressing the rapture to which the music has lifted his soul. We must remember that Milton was himself an amateur musician, and in his days of darkness found habitual diversion at his organ. Indications of a susceptible and appreciative ear for musical harmony are frequent throughout the poems.

7. **the sapphire-colored throne.** See Ezekiel 1 26.

27. **consort** is the word from which we derive our *concert*.

COMUS.

During the reigns of Elizabeth, James I., and Charles I., the *mask* was one of the most popular forms of dramatic entertainment. Having a function and a character peculiar to itself, it flourished side by side with the regular plays of the theatrical stage, and gave large scope to the genius of poets, composers, and scenic artists. The mask was usually designed to grace some important occasion, in which members of the upper classes of society, or even royal personages, were concerned. When the occasion called for particularly brilliant display, and had been long foreseen, the preparations for it would involve immense outlays for costumes, theatrical machinery, for new music, and for a libretto by a play-writer of the greatest note. When the mask was purely a private one, like Arcades and Comus, it was all the fashion for the gentle youths and maidens, for gentlemen and ladies of the highest rank, to take upon themselves the parts of the drama, to rehearse them assiduously, and finally to enact them on the private stage or on the lawn in the presence of a select audience.

The mask thus differentiated itself from the stage play in that it was not given for the pecuniary behoof of a company of actors, but represented rather expenditure for the simple purpose of producing grand effects. To act in a mask was an honor, when common players were social outcasts. The mask was got up for the occasion, and was not intended to keep the boards and attract a paying public. When the august ceremonial was over, the poet had his manuscript, to increase the bulk of his works, and the composer had his score, to furnish airs that might be played and sung in drawing-rooms if they had the good fortune to be popular.

Such was the origin of the poem which Milton, in all the editions published during his lifetime, entitled simply "A Maske presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634," but which editors since his day have agreed to name Comus.

The occasion of the poem was the coming of the Earl of Bridgewater to Ludlow Castle, to enter upon his official residence there as Lord President of Wales. The person chiefly concerned in the scenic, musical, and histrionic preparations of the mask was Milton's esteemed friend, the most accomplished musical composer of the day, Henry Lawes. Lawes composed the music and arranged the stage business. He seems to have taken upon himself the part of the Attendant Spirit. Lawes knew to whom to apply for the all-important matter of the book, the words, or the poetry, of the piece, for he had learned to know Milton's qualifications as a mask-poet in the fragment which we have under the name *Arcades*. With good music even for commonplace lyric verse, and with sprightly declamation even of conventional dialogue, the thing, as we know from modern instances, might have been carried off by gorgeous costumes and shrewdly devised scenic effects. Most of the masks of the time fell at once into oblivion. But Lawes had secured for his poet John Milton; and the consequence thereof is that the Earl of Bridgewater is now chiefly heard of because at Ludlow Castle there was enacted, in the form of a mask written by Milton, a drama which is still read and reread by every English-speaking person who reads any serious poetry, though Ludlow Castle has long been a venerable ruin.

For his plot, the poet feigned that the young children of the earl, two sons and a daughter, in coming to Ludlow, had to pass unattended through a forest, in which the boys became separated from the girl and she fell into the hands of the enchanter Comus. The Attendant Spirit appears to the youths with his magic herb, and with the further assistance of the water-nymph Sabrina, at last makes all right, and the children are restored to their parents in the midst of festive rejoicing.

The poem is dramatic, because it is acted and spoken or sung in character by its persons. It is allegorical, because it inculcates a moral, and more is meant than meets the ear. In parts it is pas-

toral, both because the chief personage appears in the guise of a shepherd, and because its motive largely depends on the superstitions and traditions of simple, ignorant folk. In the longer speeches, where events are narrated with some fulness, it becomes epic. Lastly, in its songs, in the octosyllables of the magician, and in the adjuration and the thanking of Sabrina, it is lyric. With iambic pentameter as the basis of the dialogue, the poet varies his measures as Shakespeare does his, and with very similar ends in view.

The name *Comus* Milton found ready to his hand. As a common noun, the Greek word *comus* signifies carousal, — wassail. In the later classic period it had become a proper name, standing for a personification of nocturnal revelry, and a god Comus was frequently depicted on vases and in mural paintings. Philostratus, in his *Ikŏnes*, — or *Pictures*, — gives an interesting description of a painting of this god. See Encyclopædia Britannica, article *Comus*. Ben Jonson, in his mask, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, played in 1619, presents a Comus as "the god of cheer, or the belly, riding in triumph, his head crowned with roses and other flowers, his hair curled." The character and the name were the common property of mask-writers.

The great distinction of Comus is its beauty, maintained at height through a thousand lines of supremely perfect verse. Greatly dramatic it of course is not. It yields its meaning to the most cursory reading; it has no mystery. It is simply beautiful, with a sustained beauty elsewhere unparalleled.

The following letter of Sir Henry Wotton to the Author deserves to be read both for its engaging style as a piece of English prose and for its exquisite characterization of Comus. Wotton was a versatile scholar, diplomat, and courtier, seventy years old at the time of this letter, with a reputation as a kindly and appreciative literary critic. He was now residing at Eton College, where he held the office of Provost. Milton, thirty years of age, the first edition of his Comus recently published anonymously, had good cause for elation over such a testimonial from such a source.

"From the College, this 13 of April, 1638.

"Sir,

"It was a special favour when you lately bestowed upon me here the first taste of your acquaintance, though no longer than to make me know that I wanted more time to value it and to enjoy it rightly; and, in truth, if I could then have imagined your farther stay in these parts, which I understood afterwards by Mr. H., I would have been bold, in our vulgar phrase, to mend my draught (for you left me with an extreme thirst), and to have begged your conversation again, jointly with your said learned friend, over a poor meal or two, that we might have banded together some good Authors of the ancient time; among which I observed you to have been familiar.

"Since your going, you have charged me with new obligations, both for a very kind letter from you dated the 6th of this month, and for a dainty piece of entertainment which came therewith. Wherein I should much commend the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Doric delicacy in your Songs and Odes, whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language: *Ipsa mollities.* But I must not omit to tell you that I now only owe you thanks for intimating unto me (how modestly soever) the true artificer. For the work itself I had viewed some good while before with singular delight; having received it from our common friend Mr. R., in the very close of the late R.'s Poems, printed at Oxford: whereunto it was added (as I now suppose) that the accessory might help out the principal, according to the art of Stationers, and to leave the reader *con la bocca dolce.*

"Now, Sir, concerning your travels; wherein I may challenge a little more privilege of discourse with you. I suppose you will not blanch Paris in your way: therefore I have been bold to trouble you with a few lines to Mr. M. B., whom you shall easily find attending the young Lord S. as his governor; and you may surely receive from him good directions for the shaping of your farther journey into Italy where he did reside, by my choice, some time for the King, after mine own recess from Venice.

"I should think that your best line will be through the whole length of France to Marseilles, and thence by sea to Genoa; whence the passage into Tuscany is as diurnal as a Gravesend barge. I hasten, as you do, to Florence or Siena, the rather to tell you a short story, from the interest you have given me in your safety.

"At Siena I was tabled in the house of one Alberto Scipioni, an old Roman courtier in dangerous times; having been steward to the Duca di Pagliano, who with all his family were strangled, save this only man

that escaped by foresight of the tempest. With him I had often much chat of those affairs, into which he took pleasure to look back from his native harbour; and at my departure toward Rome (which had been the centre of his experience), I had won his confidence enough to beg his advice how I might carry myself there without offence of others or of mine own conscience. '*Signor Arrigo mio*,' says he, '*I pensieri stretti ed il viso sciolto* will go safely over the whole world.' Of which Delphian oracle (for so I have found it) your judgment doth need no commentary; and therefore, Sir, I will commit you, with it, to the best of all securities, God's dear love, remaining

"Your friend, as much to command as any of longer date,

"HENRY WOTTON."

Postscript.

"Sir: I have expressly sent this my footboy to prevent your departure without some acknowledgment from me of the receipt of your obliging letter; having myself through some business, I know not how, neglected the ordinary conveyance. In any part where I shall understand you fixed, I shall be glad and diligent to entertain you with home-novelties, even for some fomentation of our friendship, too soon interrupted in the cradle."

The Latin phrase, *ipsa mollities*, may be translated, — it is the very perfection of delicacy. The Italian words below mean, — My dear Henry, thoughts close, face open.

1. Before the starry threshold of Jove's court. The attendant spirit not only announces himself as a dweller in heaven, but he specifies his particular function among the celestials: he is doorkeeper in the house of God.

3. insphered. Compare Il Penseroso 88.

7. Confined and pestered. *Pester* has its primitive meaning, to clog or encumber. **In this pinfold here.** *Pinfold* is probably not connected with the verb to pen, but is a shortened form of poundfold, and means, literally, an enclosure for stray cattle.

10. After this mortal change: after this life on earth, which is subject to death.

11. Amongst the enthroned gods. Make but two syllables of *enthroned*, and accent the first.

The long sentence ending with line 11 is very loose in construction: the *and* in line 7 is a coördinate conjunction, but does not connect coördinate elements.

13. **To lay their just hands on that golden key.** Compare Lycidas 110.

16. **these pure ambrosial weeds.** Ambrosial has its proper meaning, — pertaining to the immortals.

20. **by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove.** Neptune drew lots with Jupiter and Pluto. To Jupiter fell the region of the upper air, to Pluto the lower world, and to Neptune the sea. The ancient poets sometimes spoke of Jupiter and Pluto as the upper and the lower Jove.

25. **By course commits to several government:** in due order he assigns the islands to his tributaries, giving them an island apiece.

27. **But this Isle** is so large that he has to divide it.

29. Consider **quarters** to mean nothing more than divides. **his blue-haired deities.** The epithet is conventional, taken from the Greek poets, and probably has no special significance in this passage.

31. **A noble Peer.** This connects the poem with actual persons and announces its occasion. The noble peer is the Earl of Bridgewater, and the event which is to be celebrated is his appointment to the Viceroyalty of Wales.

33. **The old and haughty nation** are the Welsh.

34. **his fair offspring** are two sons and a daughter, who are to play the parts of the Two Brothers and the Lady in the mask.

37. **the perplexed paths of this drear wood.** Compare Par. Lost IV 176.

41. **sovran.** See note on Hymn on the Nativity 60.

45. **in hall or bower.** Hall and bower are conventionally coupled by the poets to signify the dwellings, respectively, of the gentry and the laboring classes.

46. The transformation by Bacchus of the treacherous Tuscan sailors into dolphins belongs to the established myths of that god. But Milton exercises his right as a poet to add to the classic story whatever suits his purposes.

48. **After the Tuscan mariners transformed**; a Latinism, meaning, after the transformation of the Tuscan mariners.

50. **fell:** chanced to land.

For the story of **Circe**, see the Odyssey X.

58. Understand that no such distinct character as **Comus** belongs to the received mythology. Milton is a myth-maker.

59. **frolic** is used as an adjective, as in L'Allegro 18.

60. **the Celtic and Iberian fields.** The god traversed Gaul and Spain, on his way to Britain.

61. **ominous:** abounding in mysterious signs of danger.

65. **His orient liquor.** See line 673 of this poem.

72. Note that only the countenance is changed.

87. **Well knows to still the wild winds.** The poem moves throughout in the realm of romance. The swain Thyrsis is in his own character a practitioner of magic.

88. **nor of less faith.** Thyrsis has just been described as a person of great skill.

90. **Likeliest:** most likely to be.

93. The transition from the stately mood of the Attendant Spirit's exordium to the noisy exhilaration of Comus is marked by appropriate changes in the verse. Comus speaks in a lyric strain, and his tone is exultant. When he comes to serious business, in line 145, he also employs blank-verse. The lyric lines, 93–144, rhyme in couplets, and vary in length, most of them having four accents, while some have five. The four-accent lines vary between seven and eight syllables, many of them dropping the initial light syllable, or anakrusis (Auftakt). These seven-syllable lines have a trochaic effect, but are to be scanned as iambic, the standard rhythm of the poem. **The star that bids the shepherd fold.** So Collins, in his ode To Evening, — "For when thy folding-star arising shows His paly circlet." See also Measure for Measure IV 2 218.

96. **doth allay:** doth cool.

97. The epithet **steep** is applied to the ocean, though really it is the course of the downward-moving sun that is steep.

99–101. Milton uses **pole**, as the poets were wont to do, to mean the sky; and the passage means, — the sun, moving about the earth in his oblique course, now shines upon that part of the heavens which, when it is daylight to us, is in shadow.

105. **with rosy twine**; with twined, or wreathed, roses.

108–109. **Advice . . . Age . . . Severity.** For these abstract terms substitute their concretes.

110. **their grave saws.** So Hamlet I 5 100, "all saws of books."

116. **in wavering morrice.** See M. N. Dream II 1 98; All's Well II 2 25.

118. **the dapper elves.** *Dapper* is akin to the German *tapfer*, but with a very different connotation.

124. **Love**: the Latin Amor, the Greek Eros, and our Cupid.

129. **Dark-veiled Cotytto** was a Thracian goddess, whose worship was connected with licentious frivolity.

133. **makes one blot of all the air.** Compare line 204 of this poem.

135. **thou ridest with Hecat'.** *Hecate* was a goddess of the lower world, mistress of witchcraft and the black arts.

139. **The nice Morn.** *Nice* is used in a disparaging sense, meaning over particular, minutely critical.

140. **From her cabined loop-hole peep.** As if morn dwelt in a cabin and clandestinely peeped from a small window.

141. **descry** must here mean reveal.

144. **In a light fantastic round.** Recall L'Allegro 34.

Comus and his crew are now dancing.

147. **shrouds**: hiding-places. See the verb, line 316.

151. **my wily trains.** *Trains* are tricks, as in Macbeth IV 3 118.

154. The air is **spongy** because it absorbs his magic dust.

155. **blear**, usually applied to eyes, here refers to the effect of seeing objects with blear eyes.

174. **the loose unlettered hinds.** The hinds are farm-servants, usually with an implication of rudeness and rusticity, and they are loose because unrestrained in speech and act by considerations of propriety.

177. **amiss**: in wrong or unseemly ways.

178. **swilled** is a very contemptuous word.

179. **wassailers.** See Macbeth I 7 64. The word has an interesting etymology.

188. **the grey-hooded Even.** Milton is fond of applying the epithet *gray* to the evening and the dawn. See Par. Lost IV 598. Lycidas 187.

189. **Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed.** The votarist is one who has made a vow. In this case he goes on a pilgrimage, carrying a palm branch, and wearing the pilgrim garb.

203. **the tumult of loud mirth was rife.** As to the meaning of *rife* compare Sam. Ag. 866 and Par. Lost I 650.

204. **Yet nought but single darkness do I find.** The darkness is unbroken by any ray of light.

210. **may startle well, but not astound.** *Astound* is a strong word. See Par. Lost I 281.

212. **a strong siding champion**: a champion who sides with the virtuous mind.

222. **her silver lining.** Note Milton's avoidance of the possessive *its*. In all his verse he uses *its* but three times.

231. **Within thy airy shell.** The *airy shell* in which Echo lives must be the "hollow round" of the atmosphere. Compare Hymn on the Nativity 100–103.

232. The **Meander** is the river of Asia Minor, famous for its windings.

233–237. The mention of the **nightingale** and **Narcissus** in this passage suggests that it may be a reminiscence of the chorus in the Oedipus Coloneus, — "Of this land of goodly steeds, O stranger."

237. Echo's passion for the beautiful **Narcissus** was not requited, and she pined away till she became a mere voice, which she could not utter till she was spoken to.

241. **Daughter of the Sphere**: daughter of the air, which forms a hollow sphere about the earth.

243. **And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies**: by echoing back the music of the spheres.

249–252. Even darkness smiled, as if acknowledging itself agreeably caressed by the strains of the lady's song.

251. **At every fall.** *Fall*, as a musical term, is "a sinking down or lowering of the note or voice; cadence" (New Eng. Dict.).

253. **the Sirens** dwelt on an island near Sicily, and by their sweet song allured mariners to destruction. See Odyssey XII.

254. **the Naiades** were nymphs attendant on Circe and the Sirens.

257. **And lap it in Elysium.** Compare L'Allegro 136.

257–259. **Scylla and Charybdis** were dangerous rocks and whirlpools on opposite sides of the strait of Messina. They were personified as cruel sea-monsters.

260. **Yet they**: Circe and the Sirens.

267. **Unless the goddess.** Supply *thou art*.

273. **extreme shift**: a pressing necessity of devising some expedient.

289. **Were they of manly prime or youthful bloom?** Were they in the prime of adult manhood, or in the bloom of youth?

277–290. These fourteen lines are an instance of "stichomythia, or conversation in alternate lines, which was always popular on the Attic stage. This scheme of versification is used chiefly in excited discussions, where the speakers are hurried along by the eagerness of their feelings." — Haigh, *The Tragic Drama of the Greeks*.

292. **An ox in traces** would now be a rare sight.

294. **a green mantling vine.** See Par. Lost IV 258.

299. **gay creatures of the element:** creatures of the air, — supernatural beings.

301. **And play i' the plighted clouds.** Probably the poet means the *plaited*, or *pleated*, clouds, conceiving the clouds as appearing folded together. **I was awe-strook.** See Hymn on the Nativity 95.

316. **Or shroud within these limits.** *Shroud* as a noun we saw above, line 147.

318. **From her thatched pallet rouse.** The lark builds on the ground, seeking a spot protected by overarching stems of grass or grain, which may be called a natural thatch; and if this protection is destroyed by mowers or reapers, the bird will at once take pains to build a roof or thatch over the nest, completely covering it, and for a door will make an opening on the side.

325. **where it first was named.** The derivation of the words *courteous* and *courtesy* from *court* is obvious.

327. **Less warranted than this, or less secure.** The lady says that she cannot be in any place less guaranteed than this against evil, and that she cannot anywhere be less free from anxiety. Her situation she conceives to be as bad as it can be.

329. **square my trial To my proportioned strength:** make my trial proportionate to my strength.

332. **That wont'st to love.** *Wont'st*, in the present tense, means, as we say, art wont.

333. **Stoop thy pale visage.** Stoop is thus used, transitively, Richard II. III 1 19, "myself . . . have stooped my neck."

334. **And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here.** *Chaos*, "the formless void of primordial matter," is personified by Milton here and, much more conspicuously, in Par. Lost III.

338. **a rush-candle:** a candle made with a rush for a wick, — the cheapest kind of light. **from the wicker hole Of some clay habitation.** Imagine a hut whose walls are made of wattled twigs plastered with clay. This clay when dry is apt to fall off in spots, leaving holes through which the light within can be seen from without. A wicker hole is a hole in the wicker-work, perhaps made intentionally, to serve as a window.

341–342. **The star of Arcady** is the constellation of the Greater

Bear, and the **Tyrian Cynosure** that of the Lesser Bear. Stars in these constellations served as guides to Greek and Tyrian mariners.

345. Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops. Compare Collins's Ode to Evening, — *If aught of oaten stop, or pastoral song.* The shepherds of the Greek idylls made their musical pipes of reeds or oat-straws, and the oat has therefore been adopted by the pastoral poetry of all ages.

349. innumerous boughs. Compare Par. Lost VII 455.

358. Of savage hunger, or of savage heat: of hungry savages, or of lustful savages.

361. grant they be so: grant that they are real evils.

365. Make four syllables of **delusion.**

366. I do not think my sister so to seek: I do not think she has her seeking, or learning, still to do: I do not think her so inexperienced.

373–375. Is this practical doctrine?

377. Make five syllables of **Contemplation.**

380. Were all to-ruffled. The particle *to*— Anglo Saxon *tô*, Modern German *zer*— has disappeared from Modern English. In Old English it was often used with the force of the Latin *dis*. So still in Chaucer, *to-bete*, *to-cleve*, *to-rende*, and many others.

386. affects: likes, has an affection for.

390. weeds, as in line 84.

393. the fair Hesperian tree. See line 983.

394. had need the guard. An elliptical expression. *Need* is a noun, but is treated as if it were a verb.

395. The dragon Ladon was not able to defend the apples of Hesperides against Hercules.

401. will wink on Opportunity: will fail to see its chance.

404. it recks me not. The verb is thus used, impersonally, also in Lycidas 122.

407. The line has two hypermetric syllables, one after the third foot, and one at the end.

413. squint suspicion. An epithet applicable only to a physical infirmity is applied to a mental act.

422. quivered: bearing a quiver.

423. unharbored: furnishing no shelter.

424. Infamous hills. Accent *infamous* as we do now and as Milton does elsewhere. Verses thus beginning with trochees are common.

429. Look up the origin of the word **grots**.

430. **unblenched** : unstartled.

434. **Blue meagre hag**. The *hag* has the livid hue of hunger.

436. **swart faery of the mine**. A malignant demon dwelling under ground, — a gnome.

441. **the huntress Dian**. The powerful goddess Diana, or Artemis, twin sister of Apollo, was figured bearing a bow and arrows.

448. **wise Minerva**. Minerva, or Pallas Athene, is usually represented as wearing on her breast the ægis with a border of snakes and the Gorgon's head in the centre.

460-462. Note the different modes in **begin** and **turns**, where we should look for similar constructions.

487. The ellipsis of *we had* is readily supplied. **Draw** and **stand** are infinitives.

494. **Thyrsis**, a stock shepherd-name. The spirit henceforth appears to his fellow-actors in the mask as the shepherd with whom they are familiar.

495–512. These lines express sudden emotion, and approximate lyric in character. Hence the rhyme.

508. **How chance she is not**. Supply the ellipsis.

517. **Chimeras** is here used vaguely in the plural to mean dangerous monsters.

526. **With many murmurs mixed**. The enchanter spoke or sang forms of incantation over his mixing and brewing. Recall Macbeth.

529. The word **mintage** has an interesting history. The human countenance is conceived as an imprint, like the characters on a coin.

530. **Charactered in the face**. The *noun character* Milton pronounces with accent on the first syllable, as does Shakespeare. Probably he also agrees with Shakespeare in pronouncing the *verb* with the accent on the second syllable, as this verse suggests.

531. **crofts**. The word is still in use in England, meaning a small farm.

540. **by then the chewing flocks** : by the time when, etc.

547. **To meditate my rural minstrelsy** : to play on my shepherd-pipe and to sing. To meditate the muse is a standard expression of the pastoral poets. See Lycidas 66.

552. What do we know was the cause of this **unusual stop of sudden silence**?

553–554. The cessation of the din gave to the steeds of sleep, and to people who were trying to sleep, relief from annoyance.

557–560. Be sure you understand the figure.

560. **Still**, in its very frequent sense, *always*.

562. **Under the ribs of Death**: in a skeleton.

575. **such two**; describing them.

586. **Shall be unsaid for me**: it is not necessary for me to make any change in my opinion to make it harmonize with this new aspect of affairs.

595. **Gathered like scum, and settled to itself.** The two metaphors thus combined make a rather strange mixture.

598. **The pillared firmament.** By the *firmament* is usually understood the sphere of the fixed stars. How to introduce the conception of *pillars* is not clear.

604. **Acheron.** See Par. Lost II 578.

605. The **Harpies** were monstrous birds with women's heads. Their doings are described Æneid III. The **Hydra** was a monster serpent with a hundred heads.

607. **his purchase**: his acquisition.

610. **I love thy courage yet**, though thou hast spoken most unwisely.

611. **can do thee little stead**: can avail thee but little.

617. **utmost shifts**: most carefully devised precautions.

620. **Of small regard to see to**: of very insignificant appearance.

621. **A virtuous plant** is a plant which has virtues, *i.e.* powers or qualities.

624. **Which when I did.** The modern English has lost the power of beginning a sentence thus, with two relatives.

626. **scrip**, a word in no way connected with *script*.

627. **And show me simples of a thousand names.** Compare Hamlet IV 7 145, "no cataplasm so rare, Collected from all simples that have virtue Under the moon."

634. **Unknown and like esteemed**: neither known nor esteemed.

635. **Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon.** See 2 Henry VI. IV 2 195, — "Spare none but such as go in clouted shoon," and Hamlet IV 5 26, — "By his cockle hat and staff, And his sandal shoon."

636. The story of Hermes' giving Ulysses the **Moly** read in Odyssey X. "Therewith the slayer of Argos gave me the plant that he had plucked from the ground, and he showed me the growth thereof. It was black at the root, but the flower was like to milk. Moly the gods

call it, but it is hard for mortal men to dig; howbeit with the gods all things are possible."

638. He called it Hæmony. *Hæmony* is a nonce-word of Milton's own coining. He may have derived it from a Greek word meaning *skilful* or from another meaning *blood.*

640. mildew blast, or damp. *Blast* is defined by Dr. Murray: "A sudden infection destructive to vegetable or animal life (formerly attributed to the blowing or breath of some malignant power, foul air, etc.)"; and *damp:* "An exhalation, a vapor or gas, of a noxious kind."

641. Or ghastly Furies' apparition: or the appearance of terrifying ghosts.

646. Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells. *Lime* was a viscous substance, spread upon the twigs of trees and bushes to entangle the feet of birds. The figure is frequent in Shakespeare. See Hamlet III 3 68, "O limed soul, that, struggling to be free, Art more engaged."

657. apace: quickly.

In the stage directions, **goes about** means, makes a movement.

661. as Daphne was, Root-bound, that fled Apollo. The great god, Apollo, pursuing the nymph Daphne, Diana saved her by transforming her into a laurel tree.

672. this cordial julep. *Julep* is a word of Persian origin, meaning rose-water. Note the poet's skill in culling words of delicious sound.

675. Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena. See Odyssey IV: "Then Helen, daughter of Zeus, cast a drug into the wine whereof they drank, a drug to lull all pain and anger, and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow. . . . Medicines of such virtue and so helpful had the daughter of Zeus, which Polydamna, the wife of Thon, had given her, a woman of Egypt."

685. the unexempt condition: the condition from which no one is exempt.

695. These oughly-headed monsters. Perhaps by this peculiar spelling, *oughly*, Milton meant to add to the word *ugly* a higher degree of ugliness.

698. With vizored falsehood: falsehood with its vizor, or face-piece, down, to conceal its identity.

700. With liquorish baits. *Liquorish*, now usually spelled *lick-*

erish, is allied to *lecherous*, and has no connection with *liquor* or with *liquorice*.

703. The goodness of the gift lies in the intention of the giver.

707. **those budge doctors of the stoic fur.** *Budge* is defined by Dr. Murray: "Solemn in demeanor, important-looking, pompous, stiff, formal." Cowper, in his poem Conversation, has the couplet: "The solemn fop; significant and budge; A fool with judges, amongst fools a judge." *A doctor of the Stoic fur* is a teacher of the Stoic philosophy, who wears a gown of the fur to which his degree of doctor entitles him.

708. **fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub:** teach doctrines learned from the Cynic Diogenes, who is reputed to have lived in a tub.

719. **hutched:** stowed or laid away, as in a chest or hutch.

721. **pulse;** conceived as the simplest kind of food.

722. **frieze;** to be pronounced *freeze*.

724. **and yet:** and what is yet more.

728. **Who** refers back to Nature.

734. **they below:** the people of the lower world.

737. **coy.** See Lycidas 18. **cozened.** See Merchant of Venice II 9 38.

744. **It** refers back to beauty.

748. **homely;** in the modern disparaging sense.

750. **grain:** color.

751. **To ply,** or make, a **sampler,** as a proof of her skill with the needle, was, until very modern times, the duty of every young girl. The old samplers are now precious heirlooms in families. **to tease the huswife's wool.** To *tease wool*, or to card it, was to use the teasle, or a card, to prepare it for spinning. Carding and spinning were common duties of the huswife and her daughters.

753. In what respect can **tresses** be said to be like the **morn?**

760. **when vice can bolt her arguments.** There are two verbs, spelled alike, *bolt*. One means to sift, and is used often of arguments and reasonings. To bolt arguments is to construct them with logical care and precision. The other *bolt* means to shoot forth or blurt out. We may take our choice of the two words.

773. How is the line to be scanned?

780. **Or have I said enow?** In the edition of Comus published in 1645 this passage reads, *Or have I said enough?* In the edition of 1673, the latest that he revised, Milton changed *enough* to *enow*.

Grammatically, *enough* is the better form, as the Elizabethan usage favored *enough* for the form of the adjective with singular nouns and for the adverb, and *enow* as the adjective with plurals. It would seem that the poet must have had some motive of euphony for the change he made.

788. **thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know.** A Latinism: *dignus es qui non cognoscas.*

793. **the uncontrolled worth Of this pure cause:** the invincible power inherent in the cause by virtue of its nature.

804. **Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus To some of Saturn's crew:** pronounces sentence upon his foes, condemning them to the punishments named. *Erebus* — Darkness — is one of the numerous names of the lower world, the kingdom of Pluto.

808. **the canon laws:** the fundamental laws, or the Constitution. Canon law, generally speaking, is ecclesiastical law, or the law governing the church.

817. **And backward mutters of dissevering power.** The "many murmurs" with which his incantations have been mixed must be spoken backward in order to undo their effect. This backward repetition of the charm has the power to break the spell which the charm has wrought.

822. **Melibœus** is yet another of the stock names of pastoral poetry.

823. **The soothest shepherd.** The ancient adjective *sooth* means essentially nothing more than *true.*

826. **Sabrina is her name.** The story of Sabrina is told by Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose history is included in the volume of Bohn's Antiquarian Library, entitled *Six Old English Chronicles.* The book is easily accessible.

827. **Whilom** is derived from the dative plural *hwilum* of the Old English noun *hwil*, and originally meant *at times.*

831. What does Sabrina do in this line?

835. **aged Nereus** was one of the numerous Greek deities of the water. He and his wife Doris had fifty or a hundred daughters, who are called Nereids.

838. **In nectared lavers strewed with asphodel.** The *nectar* of the gods, which we usually think of as their drink, was also applied to other purposes, as when Thetis anoints with it the body of Patroclus, to prevent decay. *Asphodel* is a flower in our actual flora; but in the

poets Asphodel is an immortal flower growing abundantly in the meadows of Elysium.

840. **ambrosial** here means, *conferring immortality.*

845. **Helping all urchin blasts**; *i.e.* helping the victims of the blasts against their baleful influence. See note on line 640. See Merry Wives of Windsor IV 4 49.

851. The word **daffodil** is directly derived from asphodel, with a *d* unaccountably prefixed. The English daffodil is the narcissus.

858. **adjuring**: charging or entreating solemnly and earnestly, as if under oath.

868. **Oceănus** is the personified Ocean, a broad, flowing stream encircling the earth.

869. **Earth-shaking** is a Homeric epithet of Neptune. The **mace** of Neptune must be his trident.

870. **Tethys** is wife of Oceanus and mother of the Oceanids. She reared the great goddess Juno, wife of Jupiter. Her **pace** is suitable to her dignity.

871. **hoary Nereus.** See note on line 835.

872. **the Carpathian wizard's hook.** Proteus, son of Oceanus and Tethys, herded the sea-calves of Neptune on the island of Carpathus. As a herdsman he bore a crook, or *hook.* He had the gift of prophecy, and so is called a *wizard.*

873. **Scaly Triton's winding shell.** *Triton* was herald of Neptune and so carried a shell, which he was wont to *wind* as a horn. His body was in part covered with scales like those of a fish.

874. The **soothsaying Glaucus** was a prophet, and gave oracles at Delos. He is represented as a man whose hair and beard are dripping with water, with bristly eyebrows, his breast covered with sea-weeds, and the lower part of his body ending in the tail of a fish.

875. **By Leucothĕa's lovely hands,**
And her son that rules the strands.

Ino, after she had slain herself and her son Melicertes, by leaping with him into the sea, became a protecting deity of mariners under the name Leucothea, or the white goddess. So she came to the aid of Ulysses when he was passing on his raft from Calypso's isle to Phæacia. She there appears "with fair ankles," and when she receives back from him her veil, which she had lent him, she does it with "*lovely hands.*"

Melicertes becomes a protecting deity of shores, under the name Palæmon. The Romans identified him with their god Portunus.

877. **By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet.** Thetis was the wife of Peleus, and the mother of Achilles. In Homer she has the epithet *silver-footed.*

878. **the songs of Sirens.** See note on line 253.

879. **By dead Parthenope's dear tomb.** Parthenope was one of the Sirens. At Naples her tomb was shown.

880. **And fair Ligea's golden comb.** Ligea was probably also a siren. In Virgil, Georgics IV 336, we find a nymph of this name, spinning wool with other nymphs, "their bright locks floating over their snowy necks." The name Ligea means shrill-voiced.

887. In the reading make **in** an adverb.

892. **My sliding chariot stays.** Compare this use of *stay* with that found in lines 134, 577, 820.

893. **the azurn sheen.** With *azurn* compare *cedarn*, line 990.

908–909. Be careful what inflection you give these lines in the reading.

913. **of precious cure:** of precious power to cure.

921. **To wait in Amphitrite's bower.** *Amphitrite* was a daughter of Oceanus and Tethys. She was goddess of the sea, had the care of its creatures, and could stir up the waves in storm.

923. **Sprung of old Anchises' line.** According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Brutus the Trojan was the grandson of Æneas and founder of London. Anchises, in the Homeric story, is the father of Æneas. This fable plays an important part in the ancient British myth.

924. **thy brimmed waves.** A river is happiest when full to its brim.

930. Of what parts of speech are **torrent** and **flood**?

933. It is very curious that our word **beryl** and the German *Brille* come directly from the same source.

937. And yet this river is the English Severn!

957. Note the impressive effect of the five-foot line ending the scene.

The shepherds have their dance in rustic fashion. The words describing this dance are the familiar peasant words, jig, duck, nod. The playful tone in which the spirit calls upon the swains to give place to their betters is charming.

964. **With the mincing Dryades.** "The *Dryades* were nymphs of woods and trees, dwelling in groves, ravines, and wooded valleys, and were fond of making merry with Apollo, Mercury, and Pan."

980. **I suck the liquid air:** I inhale the upper air, — the *æther*

liquidus of the poets. So Ariel, Tempest V 1 102, "I drink the air before me."

981. the gardens fair Of Hesperus and his daughters three. The number of the Hesperides and their parentage are differently given in various legends. The story of their garden in some mysterious place in the far west, where they guarded the tree that bore the golden apples, assisted by the dragon Ladon, is one of the best known in the classic mythology.

984. Along the crisped shades and bowers. Milton applies *crisped* to brooks, Par. Lost IV 237. Herrick has, — "the crisped yew," and the American Thoreau, — "A million crisped waves."

985. spruce. A very interesting account of the origin of this word is given by Skeat in his Etymological Dictionary.

986. The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours. See note on L'Allegro 15. "The *Graces* were guardians of the vernal sweetness and beauty of nature, friends and protectors of everything graceful and beautiful." The *Hours* were goddesses of the seasons, daughters of Zeus and Themis. They were the door-keepers of Olympus, whose cloud-gate they open and shut: thus they preside over the weather.

990. About the cedarn alleys: about the pathways through cedar groves. Coleridge, in Kubla Khan, has the line, "Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover"; and Tennyson, Geraint and Enid, the line, — "And moving toward a cedarn cabinet." So also William Barnes, in his Rural Poems, uses the expression, "stonen jugs."

992. Iris is the messenger of the gods: her path is the rainbow.

993. Dr. Murray gives other instances of **blow as a transitive verb.**

999. Adonis was a young shepherd, the special favorite of Venus. His death was caused by a wild boar. The story is told in various forms. Observe that Milton makes him wax well of his deep wound.

1002. the Assyrian queen. The worship of Aphrodite (Venus) was brought into Greece from Assyria.

1005. Holds his dear Psyche. Psyche — the personification of the human soul — was a mortal maiden, beloved of Cupid. Venus, in her jealousy of Psyche, compelled her to pass through a long series of hardships and toils. Cupid at last succeeded in reconciling his mother and his beloved, and in having *Psyche* advanced to the dignity of an immortal.

1015. Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend: where the curva-

ture of the vault of the sky seems less than higher up toward the zenith.

1021. **the sphery chime.** See notes, Hymn on the Nativity 48 and 125.

LYCIDAS.

Lycidas is Milton's contribution to a volume of elegiac verses, in Greek, Latin, and English, composed by many college friends of Edward King, who was drowned in the wreck of the vessel in which he was crossing the Irish Channel.

In its main intention, Lycidas is an elegy, because it professes to mourn one who is dead and extols his virtues. In its form it is almost wholly pastoral, because it feigns an environment of shepherds, allegorizing college life as the life of men tending flocks, and the occupations of earnest students as the careless diversions of rustic swains.

Four times the pastoral note is rudely interrupted by the intervention of majestic beings who speak in awful tones from another world, and whose voices instantly check all familiar rustic speech, compelling it to wait till they have announced their messages from above. The supernal powers who thus descend to take their parts in the office of mourning are Phœbus Apollo, Hippotades, god of the winds, Camus, god of the river Cam, and St. Peter. This mingling of classic, Hebrew, and Christian conceptions is a marked characteristic of all Milton's poetry.

Thus Lycidas is neither wholly elegiac nor wholly pastoral. From the lips of St. Peter, typifying the church, comes a speech of violent denunciation, in the true later Miltonic manner. In strange contrast to this grim invective is the famous flower-passage, the sweetest and loveliest thing of its kind in our literature.

1–5. To pluck once more the berries of the evergreens, or to gather laurels, — is to make a new venture as a poet, — to compose a poem. The berries are harsh and crude, — he shatters their leaves before the mellowing year, either because he is to mourn the death of a young man, or because he feels in himself a lack of "inward ripeness" to treat his theme worthily, — perhaps for both reasons. He shatters the leaves with forced fingers rude, in the sense that his subject is not of his own choosing.

6–7. A sad duty is imposed upon him, forbidding further delay on any personal grounds.

8. **Lycidas** is one of the stock names of pastoral poetry. The poem, though most serious in its main motive and intention, is to have a pastoral coloring throughout. Note the impressive repetitions, **dead, dead**, and the recurrences of the name Lycidas in the next two lines.

11. **he knew Himself to sing and build the lofty rhyme.** Edward King had, in accordance with the college custom of his time, written verses, apparently all in Latin. Of these verses Masson, in his life of Milton, gives specimens. They seem to be commonplace.

13. **and welter to the parching wind.** See Par. Lost II 594, I 78.

15. **Sisters of the sacred well.** Ancient tradition connects the origin of the Muses with Pieria, a district of Macedonia at the foot of Olympus. But the springs with which we associate the Muses are Aganippe and Hippocrene on Mount Helicon.

19. **So may some gentle muse.** A peculiar use of the word *muse* as masculine, and meaning *poet*.

23–31. We pursued the same studies, at the same college, and we studied from early morning sometimes till after midnight. The metaphors are all pastoral.

32–36. We wrote merry verse, bringing in the college jollities, in wanton student-fashion, and the good-natured old don who was our tutor affected to be pleased with our work.

34. **Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel.** The *Satyrs*, represented as having human forms, with small goat's horns and a small tail, had for their occupation to play on the flute for their master, Bacchus, or to pour his wine. The *Fauns* were sylvan deities, attendants of Pan, and are represented, like their master, with the ears, horns, and legs of a goat.

37–49. Nature herself sympathizes with men, and mourns thy loss.

50. **Nymphs**: deities of the forests and streams.

52. **on the steep Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie.** The shipwreck in which King was lost took place off the coast of Wales. Any one of the Welsh mountains will serve to make good this allusion.

54. **Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high.** *Mona* is the ancient and poetical name of the island of Anglesea.

55. **Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.** The Dee (Deva) below Chester expands into a broad estuary. In his lines

spoken At a Vacation Exercise, Milton, characterizing many rivers, mentions the "ancient hallowed Dee." The country about the Dee had been specially famous as the seat of the old Druidical religion. In the eleventh Song of his Polyolbion, Drayton eulogizes the medicinal virtues of the salt springs in the valley of the river Weever, which attract Thetis and the Nereids: —

> And Amphitrite oft this Wizard River led
> Into her secret walks (the depths profound and dread)
> Of him (supposed so wise) the hid events to know
> Of things that were to come, as things done long ago.
> In which he had been proved most exquisite to be;
> And bare his fame so far, that oft twixt him and Dee,
> Much strife there hath arose in their prophetic skill.

56–63. Even the Muse Calliope could do nothing for her son Orpheus, whom the Thracian women tore to pieces under the excitement of their Bacchanalian orgies. The gory visage floated down the Hebrus and through the Ægean Sea to the island of Lesbos.

64. what boots it: of what use is it?

64–66. What good are we going to derive from this unremitting devotion to study?

67–69. Would it not be better to abandon ourselves to social enjoyment, and to lives of frivolous trifling? **Amaryllis** and **Neæra** are stock names of shepherdesses.

70–72. Understand **clear**, as applied to **spirit**, to mean "pure, guileless, unsophisticated." Sir Henry Wotton, in his Panegyric to King Charles, says of King James I., — "I will not deny his appetite of glory, which generous minds do ever latest part from." Love of fame, according to the poet, is the motive that prompts the scholar to live as an ascetic and to persevere in toilsome labor. This love of fame is an infirmity, but not a debasing one: it leaves the mind noble. Remember, however, that the author of the Imitation of Christ prayed, *Da mihi nesciri.*

75. the blind Fury with the abhorred shears. Milton here seems to ascribe to the Furies (Erinyes) the function belonging to the Fates (Parcæ, Moiræ). The three Fates were Klotho, the Spinner; Lachĕsis, the Assigner of lots; and Atrŏpos, the Unchanging. It was the duty of Atropos to cut the thread of life at the appointed time.

A querulous thought comes to the poet's mind. Our lives are obscure and laborious, sustained only by the hope of future fame;

but before we attain our reward, comes death, and our ambition is brought to naught.

76–77. But not the praise, Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears. The Fury cannot destroy the praise, which necessarily belongs to doing well. Praise here means the essential praise, which naturally inheres in excellence, and not the being talked about by men.

The speaker is now Phœbus, the august god Apollo, the pure one, who protects law and order, and promotes whatever is good and beautiful; who reveals the will of Zeus, and presides over prophecy.

Phœbus has now an admonition to give and he touches the poet's ears; as in Virgil, Eclogue IV 3, — *Cynthius aurem vellit et admonuit*, "The Cynthian twitched my ear and warned me."

79. in the glistering foil Set off. See Shakespeare, Richard III. V 3 250, — "A base foul stone, made precious by the foil of England's chair."

85–86. O fountain Arethuse, and thou honored flood, Smooth-sliding Mincius. Arethusa was a fresh-water fountain at Syracuse in Sicily, and the Mincius is a river in north Italy, on which is situated Mantua, the birthplace of the poet Virgil. The great pastoral poet Theocritus is said to have been born at Syracuse. Thus Arethusa and the Mincius typify the pastoral tone in which Milton conceives and constructs his poem. But the intervention of the great god Apollo has frighted the bucolic muses, to whom therefore the poet explains it, line 87.

88. Now I am on good terms again with the deities of lower rank. **Oat** is a common designation of the shepherd's pipe, or syrinx.

89–90. Neptune, through his herald, Triton, pleads his freedom from all complicity in the drowning of Lycidas. Triton sends to Æolus, god of the winds, requesting him to cross-question all his subjects as to what they were doing on the day of the wreck.

95–99. The winds prove their innocence, and Æŏlus himself comes to report to Triton that at the time of the disaster they were all at home and the air was perfectly calm. Even Panope and all her sisters were out playing on the tranquil water.

96. sage Hippotădes. Æolus was the son of Hippotes. See all about him in Odyssey, book X. Read also Ruskin, Queen of the Air section 19.

99. Panope was a Nereid, one of the numerous daughters of Nereus.

103. Now comes another grand personage to make inquiry about the death of Lycidas. **Camus**, the deity of the river Cam, stands for the University of Cambridge.

104. **His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge.** The river god is represented as wearing a mantle made of water-grasses and reeds.

105–106. These lines refer to certain markings on the water-plants of the Cam, said to be correctly described here by the poet. The dimness of the figures may suggest the great age of the university, and the tokens of woe belong to the present occasion.

106. **that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.** This is the hyacinth, the flower that sprang up on the spot where the youth Hyacinthus had been accidentally slain by Apollo. The petals of the hyacinth are said to be marked with the Greek letters AI AI, which form an interjection expressing grief.

107. Lycidas was one of those collegians whose scholarship, character, and piety promise to make them the pride of their Alma Mater.

109. **The Pilot of the Galilean Lake.** See Matthew XIV.

110. **Two massy keys he bore of metals twain.** See Matthew XVI 19. See also Comus 13 and Par. Lost III 485. The idea of *two* keys, one of gold and one of iron, is not in the Bible.

112. **He shook his mitred locks.** St. Peter wears the mitre as bishop.

113–131. St. Peter makes but little reference to Lycidas, and his words add almost nothing to the elegiac character of the poem. His speech is one of stern and bitter satire. The second period of Milton's life, which is to be given up to intense and uncompromising partisanship in religion and politics, foreshadows itself in these lines.

114. **Enow** is here used in its proper plural sense. See note on Comus 780.

115. **climb into the fold.** See John x 1. The metaphor of sheep and herdsmen is continued throughout the speech.

119. **Blind mouths!** As the relative pronoun beginning the next clause refers to this exclamation, mouths must be taken as a bold metaphor meaning men who are all mouth, or are supremely greedy and selfish. Moreover, they are blind.

122. **What recks it them?** See note on Comus 404. **They are sped**: they have succeeded in their purpose. See Antony and Cleopatra II 3 35. Note also the phrase of greeting, *bid God speed*, as in 2 John 1 10, 11, King James version.

123. their lean and flashy songs: their sermons.

Evidently Milton can cull words of extreme disparagement and vilification as well as words of unapproachable poetic beauty.

125–127. The congregations are not edified. The miserable preaching they listen to fails to keep them sound in doctrine. They grow lax in their faith, and heretical opinions become fashionable.

128. the grim wolf with privy paw is undoubtedly the Roman church.

130–131. These lines evidently denounce some terrible retribution that is sure ere long to overtake the corrupt clergy described in the preceding passage. The **two-handed engine at the door, that stands ready to smite once and smite no more**, has never been definitely explained. We naturally think of the headsman's axe, which, however, does not become applicable till the execution of Archbishop Laud, an event not to take place till eight years after the composition of the poem. It has been suggested that Milton had in mind the two houses of Parliament, or the Parliament and the Army, as the agency through which reform was to be effected. We must remember that Milton in 1637 could not foresee the Civil War. He may have meant to combine certain scriptural expressions into a mysteriously suggestive and oracular prediction, without having in view any single and definite possibility.

132. Return, Alphēus. The Alpheus was a river of the Peloponnesus, said to sink underground and to flow beneath the sea to Ortygia, near Syracuse, where it attempted to mingle its waters with those of the fountain Arethusa. See note on lines 85, 86. See also Shelley's poem, Arethusa.

The pastoral tone of lightness and simplicity could not be maintained while St. Peter spoke. But now the Sicilian Muse returns, all the more lovely for the contrast with the stern malediction that has gone before.

134–151. Milton is fond of thus collecting names of persons, places, and things, choosing them as well for their effect on the ear as for their significance. The botany of this passage is of little consequence: it matters not whether all these flowers could, or could not, be collected at the same season, or whether they could be found at the time of the year when Lycidas died. The passage offers a picture of exquisite beauty to the eye, and to the ear a strain of perfect melody.

136. where the mild whispers use. The verb *use*, in this intran-

sitive sense, with only adverbial complement, and meaning *dwell*, is now obsolete.

138. **the swart star**: the star that makes *swart*, or *swarthy*; *i.e.* the sun.

139. **enamelled eyes** are the flowers generally, which are to be specified. Scattered over the turf, the flowers seem to be looking upward, like eyes.

142. **rathe** is the adjective whose comparative is our *rather*.

149. **amaranthus**, by its etymology, means *unfading*.

150. **Daffadil** is derived from *asphodel*, with a curious, and altogether unusual, prefixed *d*.

153. **dally with false surmise.** King's body was not found. There was no actual strewing of the laureate hearse with flowers.

156. **the stormy Hebrides**: islands off the northwest coast of Scotland.

160. **Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old.** The fable of Bellerus is the fabled Bellerus, or Bellerus of the fable. He was a mythical giant of Cornwall in old British legend. Bellerium was the name given to Land's End, where he was supposed to live.

161. **the great Vision of the guarded mount.** St. Michael's Mount is a pyramidal rock in Mounts Bay on the coast of Cornwall. This was guarded by the angel, St. Michael, whose gaze was directed seaward, toward Namancos and Bayona, in northwestern Spain. In some unknown place between these widely sundered limits, the body of Lycidas is tossed.

170. **with new-spangled ore.** *Ore*, from its original meaning of metal in the natural state, comes to signify metallic lustre generally. See Comus 719, 933.

173. See Matthew XIV 25.

175. Compare Comus 838.

176. **the unexpressive nuptial song.** See Hymn on the Nativity 116. See also Revelation XIX 7–9.

181. **And wipe the tears forever from his eyes.** See Revelation XXI 4.

183. **Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore.** This is the same promotion that was accorded to Melicertes, son of Ino, who on his death became the genius of the shore under the name of Palæmon.

186. **uncouth**; a self-depreciating expression meaning *unknown* or *obscure*.

187. Milton applies the epithet **gray** both to evening and to morning.

188. **various quills** are the tubes of the shepherd pipe.

189. **Doric** means simply *pastoral*, because the idylls of the first pastoral poets were written in the Doric dialect of Greek.

190. **had stretched out all the hills**: had caused the shadows of the hills to prolong themselves eastward on the plain.

The poet seems to feign that he spent a day in the composition of Lycidas.

SONNETS.

Of poems in strict sonnet form, that is, containing neither more nor less than fourteen decasyllable iambic lines, interlocked by some scheme of symmetrical rhyme, not in couplets, Milton left twenty-three, of which five are in Italian. Of the three sonnets in English omitted from this edition, two have reference to the violent controversy occasioned by Milton's publications in advocacy of greater freedom of divorce, and are rough and polemic in style; the third is omitted on account of its unimportance and lack of distinction.

In their dates the twenty-three sonnets range from the poet's twenty-third to his fiftieth year. They are the only form of verse in which he indulges during that middle period of his life which was abandoned to political partisanship on the side of the Parliament in the Civil War, and to the service of the government during the Commonwealth and the Protectorate. If, as is now widely believed, Shakespeare's sonnets are artificial and tell us little or nothing about their author, those of Milton are purely natural and subjective and tell us nothing else but what their writer was thinking and feeling. Their themes are his veritable moods and passions. The mood is now friendly, amiable, and serene, now bitter, strenuous, indignant, vindictive.

Wordsworth, in his sonnet, *Scorn not the Sonnet*, thus refers to Milton's sparing use of this poetic form:—

> and when a damp
> Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
> The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains,—alas too few.

The Shakespearean sonnet consists of three quatrains followed by a couplet, — the usual English form up to the seventeenth century. Milton adopted the Italian, or Petrarchian, model, which has continued to be the standard sonnet form in our modern poetry. In the Miltonic, or Italian, sonnet a group of eight lines, linked by two rhymes each occurring four times, is followed by a group of six lines linked by three rhymes each occurring twice. The octave and the sextet are severed from each other by the non-continuance of the rhymes of the former into the latter. At the end of the octave, or near it, is usually a pause, marking the culmination of the thought, and the sextet makes an inference or rounds out the sense to an artistic whole.

Read Wordsworth's sonnets, *Happy the feeling from the bosom thrown*, and *Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room.*

I.

The date of this sonnet is unknown. From the fact that it comes first in the series as arranged by the poet, it is inferred that it is the earliest sonnet he chose to publish.

4. the jolly Hours. See note on Comus 986.

5–6. To hear the nightingale before the cuckoo was for lovers a good sign. This superstition is a motive in the *Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, a poem formerly attributed to Chaucer, and as such "modernized" by Wordsworth, but now known to be the work of Sir Thomas Clanvowe. Stanza X of this poem is thus given by Wordsworth: —

> But tossing lately on a sleepless bed,
> I of a token thought which Lovers heed;
> How among them it was a common tale,
> That it was good to hear the Nightingale
> Ere the vile Cuckoo's note be utterèd.

9. the rude bird of hate. This gives to the cuckoo altogether too bad a character. The bird has on the whole a fair standing in English poetry. We must think of the very pleasing *Ode to the Cuckoo*, — written either by Michael Bruce or by John Logan, — as well as of the passage in which Shakespeare makes Lucrece ask (line 848), —

> Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud?
> Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows' nests?

Look up other nightingale and cuckoo songs; for example, Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, and Wordsworth's *The Cuckoo at Laverna*.

II (1631).

This sonnet Milton appears to have sent with a prose letter to a friend who had remonstrated with him on the life of desultory study which he was so long continuing to lead. In this letter he professes the principle of "not taking thought of being *late*, so it gave advantage to be more fit." He adds, "That you may see that I am something suspicious of myself, and do take notice of a certain *belatedness* in me, I am the bolder to send you some of my nightward thoughts some little while ago, because they come in not altogether unfitly, made up in a Petrarchian stanza, which I told you of."

8. **timely-happy**: wise with the wisdom proportionate to one's years. Similar compounds of two adjectives in Shakespeare are very frequent; for example, holy-cruel, heady-rash, proper-false, devilish-holy, cold-pale.

10. **even**: equal, adequate.

VIII (1642).

The occasion of this sonnet was the near approach of the royalist army to London, early in the Civil War. The people of the city had reason to fear the entrance of the cavalier troops and the sacking of the houses of citizens obnoxious to the party of the king. Milton would have been an object of special animosity to victorious royalists, and for a short time he had grounds for the acutest anxiety. It is not easy to see how, in case of actual pillage of the city, he could have made use of such an appeal as this. The sonnet is probably to be regarded as a work of art constructed when the vicissitudes which it pictures were happily past, and when the poet's mind had regained its tranquillity.

1. Note that **Colonel** has three syllables, according to the pronunciation prevailing in Milton's time. Look up the etymology of this word.

10. The great Emathian conqueror: Alexander the Great, called Emathian from Emathia, a district of his kingdom of Macedonia.

11. bid spare The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower Went to the ground. Alexander destroyed the city of Thebes in 335 B.C. Pindar, the famous lyric poet, a native and resident of Thebes, had then been dead more than a century. But Pindar's house still stood, and was left standing by the conqueror, who destroyed all other buildings of the city.

12. the repeated air Of sad Electra's poet had the power To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare. To quote from Plutarch, Life of Lysander: "The proposal was made in the congress of the allies, that the Athenians should all be sold as slaves; on which occasion Erianthus, the Theban, gave his vote to pull down the city and turn the country into sheep-pasture; yet afterward, when there was a meeting of the captains together, a man of Phocis singing the first chorus in Euripides' Electra, which begins, —

> "Electra, Agamemnon's child, I come
> Unto thy desert home,

they were all melted with compassion, and it seemed to be a cruel deed to destroy and pull down a city which had been so famous, and produced such men."

IX (1644).

Who the virtuous young lady was is not known.

2. See the gospel of Matthew VII 13.

5. See Luke X 40–42; Ruth I 14.

8. Note the "identical" rhyme. The effect of such a rhyme is unpleasant. Modern poets avoid it.

9–14. See Matthew XXV 1–13.

X (1644 or 1645).

Lady Margaret's father was the Earl of Marlborough, who had been President of the Council under Charles I. Milton attributes his death to political anxiety caused by the dissolution of Charles's third Parliament in 1629.

6–8. that dishonest victory at Chæronea. The victory of Philip over the Greeks at Chæronea, B.C. 338, is called by the poet *dishonest* because obtained by means of intrigue and bribery. **that old man**

eloquent is the orator and rhetorician Isocrates, who, in his grief over the defeat of his countrymen, committed suicide.

9. **later born than to have known**: too late to have known. *Serius nata quam ut cognosceres.*

XIII (1646).

"In these lines, Milton, with a musical perception not common amongst poets, exactly indicates the great merit of Lawes, which distinguishes his compositions from those of many of his contemporaries and successors. His careful attention to the words of the poet, the manner in which his music seems to grow from those words, the perfect coincidence of the musical with the metrical accent, all put Lawes's songs on a level with those of Schumann or Liszt." — *Encyclopædia Britannica.*

See introductory notes to Comus and Arcades.

3–4. **not to scan With Midas' ears.** The god Apollo, during the time of his servitude to Laomedon, had a quarrel with Pan, who insisted that the flute was a better instrument than the lyre. The decision was left to Midas, king of Lydia, who decided in favor of Pan. To punish Midas, Apollo changed his ears into those of an ass.

4. **committing short and long**: setting long syllables and short ones to fight against each other, and so destroying harmony.

5. The subject is conceived as a single idea, and so takes the verb in the singular. **exempts thee**: singles thee out, selects thee.

8. **couldst humor best our tongue**: couldst best adapt or accommodate itself to our language.

10. **Phœbus' quire**: the poets. *Quire* is Milton's spelling of *choir*.

12–14. Read the story of Dante's meeting with his friend, the musician Casella, in the second canto of Purgatory.

XV (1648).

The taking of Colchester by the parliamentary army under Fairfax, Aug. 28, 1648, was one of the most important events of the Civil War.

7. **the false North displays Her broken league.** The Scotch and the English accused each other of having violated the Solemn League and Covenant, to which the people of both countries had subscribed.

8. **to imp their serpent wings.** To *imp* a wing with feathers is to attach feathers to it so as to strengthen or improve its flight. The word is originally a term of falconry. See Richard II. II 1 292. See also Murray's *New English Dictionary*.

13–14. **Valor, Avarice, Rapine**; personified abstracts, after the manner of our earlier poetry.

XVI.

As Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Council of State of the Commonwealth, Milton saw much of Cromwell, and came under the influence of his voice and manner. Whether the great general had ever taken note of the poems written by the secretary who turned his despatches into Latin, or whether he gave any special heed to the man himself, with whom he must have come into some sort of personal relation, we have no means of knowing. We know, however, perfectly well what the poet thought of the victorious general. Though by no means always approving his state policy, Milton retained to the end the warm personal admiration for Cromwell which he expresses in this sonnet.

7–9. **Darwen stream**, usually spoken of as the battle of Preston, was fought Aug. 17, 1648; **Dunbar**, Sept. 3, 1650; **Worcester**, Sept. 3, 1651.

12. **to bind our souls with secular chains**: to fetter our religious freedom with laws made by the civil power.

14. **hireling wolves.** Milton applies this degrading appellation to clergymen who received pay from the state. His appeal to Cromwell was not successful. Cromwell was to become the chief supporter of a church establishment.

XVII (1652).

Sir Henry Vane was member of a committee of the Council of State appointed in 1649 to consider alliances and relations with the European powers. Milton, as Secretary of the Council, had abundant opportunity to observe Vane's skill in diplomacy, his ability to "unfold the drift of hollow states hard to be spelled." Both Vane and Milton held to the doctrine, preëminently associated with the name of Roger Williams, of universal toleration, based on

the refusal to the civil magistrate of any authority in spiritual matters.

1. Vane, young in years: Vane was born in 1613.

3. gowns, not arms: civilians, not soldiers. The expression is a Latinism, the *gown* standing for the *toga*.

4. The fierce Epirot and the African bold: Pyrrhus and Hannibal

6. hard to be spelled. Compare Il Penseroso 170.

XVIII (1655).

The historical event which furnishes the occasion of this sonnet is the persecution of the Protestant Waldenses by the Piedmontese and French governments, at the time of Cromwell's Protectorate. Cromwell's vigorous and successful intervention was the means of staying this horror, and gives evidence of the respect entertained for his government among the states of Europe.

4. when all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones. Christianity had been introduced into the Waldensian country while Britain was still pagan.

5. their groans Who were thy sheep: the groans of those who were.

12. The triple Tyrant. The Pope, who wore a triple crown.

14. the Babylonian woe. The puritans interpreted the *Babylon* of Revelation as the church of Rome. See Revelation XVIII.

XIX.

The sonnet, says Masson, may have been written any time between 1652 and 1655.

2. Ere half my days. Milton's blindness is considered to have become total in 1652, when he was at the age of forty-four. How shall we understand these words?

3. See the Parable of the Talents, Matthew XXV.

8. I fondly ask. See note on Il Pens. 6.

XX.

Probable date, 1655. Of the Mr. Lawrence to whom the sonnet is addressed nothing is certainly known.

6. **Favonius** is the Latin name for Zephyrus, the west wind.

10. **Attic**: refined, delicate, poignant.

13. **and spare To interpose them oft**: refrain from too free enjoyment of them.

XXI.

The second sonnet to Cyriac Skinner determines its own date as 1655, and this one is probably to be assigned to the same year.

But little is known of the person to whom this sonnet and the next one are addressed, except what we learn from the sonnets themselves, — that he was an intimate and esteemed friend of Milton. He may have been one of Milton's pupils; and he may, when his old teacher had become blind, have rendered him important services as amanuensis or as reader.

1–4. Cyriac Skinner's mother was daughter of the famous lawyer and judge, Sir Edward Coke.

2. **Themis** is personified *law*, this being the meaning of the Greek word.

7. **Let Euclid rest, and Archimedes pause**: intermit for a day your severe mathematical studies.

8. **And what the Swede intend, and what the French**: and pay no heed to foreign news.

XXII (1655).

1. **this three years' day**: three years ago to-day.

10. Milton's duties as Latin secretary to the government were exceedingly arduous.

XXIII.

Milton's second wife died in February, 1658; her child lived but a short time. At the time of his second marriage Milton had been blind several years. Notice the reference in the sonnet to the sense of sight: in his dream he *saw*.

2. **like Alcestis.** Read the story of the Love of Alcestis in William Morris's Earthly Paradise ; and read in Euripides, "That strangest, saddest, sweetest song of his, Alkestis."

6. **Purification in the Old Law.** See Leviticus XII.

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